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LIVES

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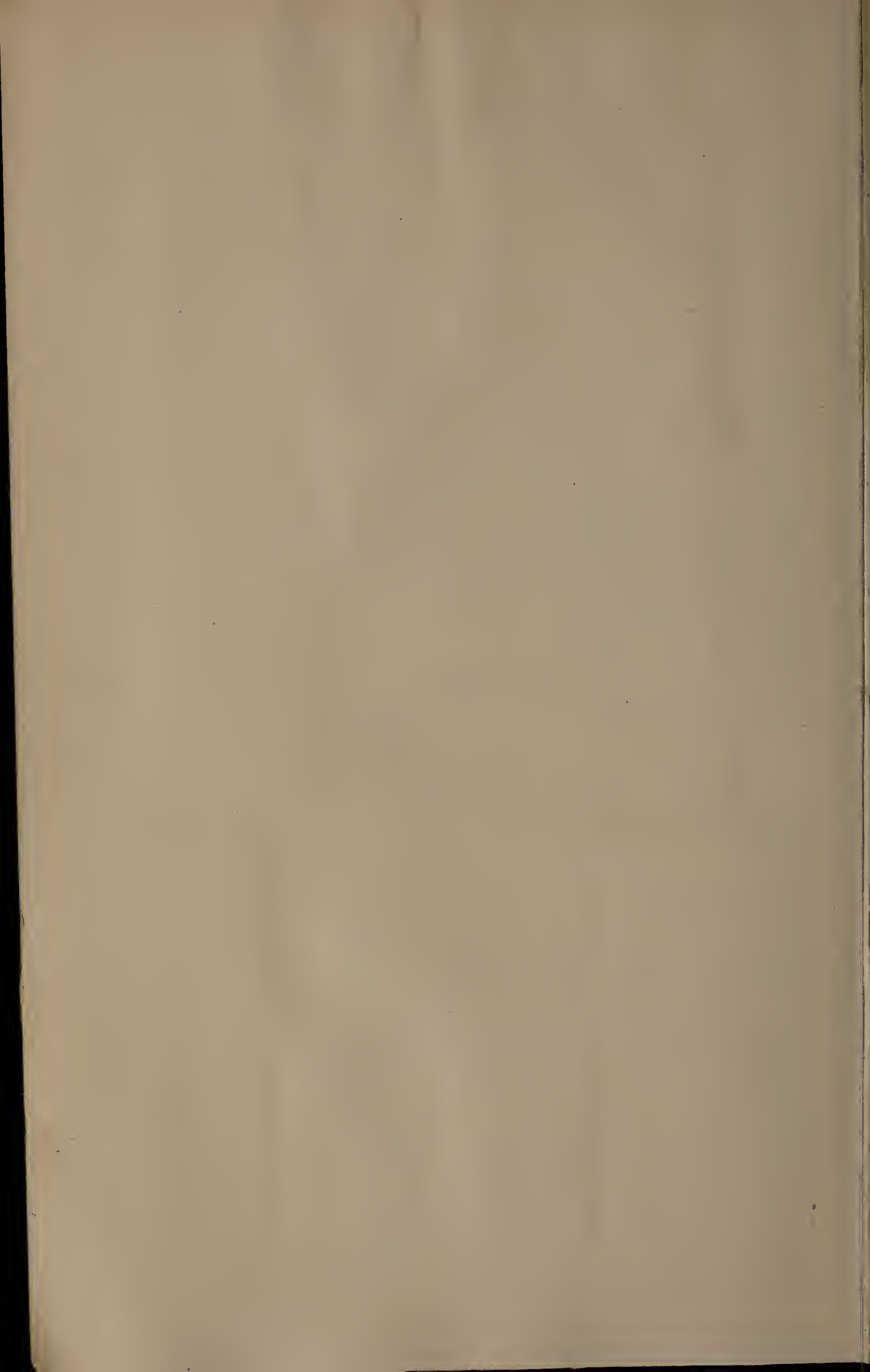
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HIDDEN LIVES

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BY

M. LEONORA EYLES

"Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts?"—H. G. WELLS (*Outline of History*).



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TO
MARCH WALKER

MY DEAREST MARCO,

I was reading my book to-day, here in the scented silence of the moors, and it brought back to me all that grunt and sweat of a weary life of which you and I know so much. Much of the detail of the book has come to me through you; you will see that I have written about your Bethesda dream. But most of all has the spirit of the book come from you. As Mr. Wells says in his *Outline of History*, "We must remember that, through all those ages, leaving profound consequences, but leaving no conspicuous records and scars upon the historian's page, countless men and women were touched by that spirit of Jesus which still lived and lives still at the core of Christianity, that they led lives that were . . . gracious and helpful, and that they did unselfish and devoted deeds. Through those ages such lives have cleared the air and made a better world possible."

I know of no life so gracious and so helpful as yours. So I am putting your name here at the beginning of my book. I have tried here to show lives blunderingly, hopefully, unconsciously often, doing the will of a secret God, groping to find Him until at last His splendour shines upon them and they need blunder and grope no longer . . . even as you and I.

Here is my book, dear Marco, a little monument to your gentle and quiet goodness, and with it I send you my love.

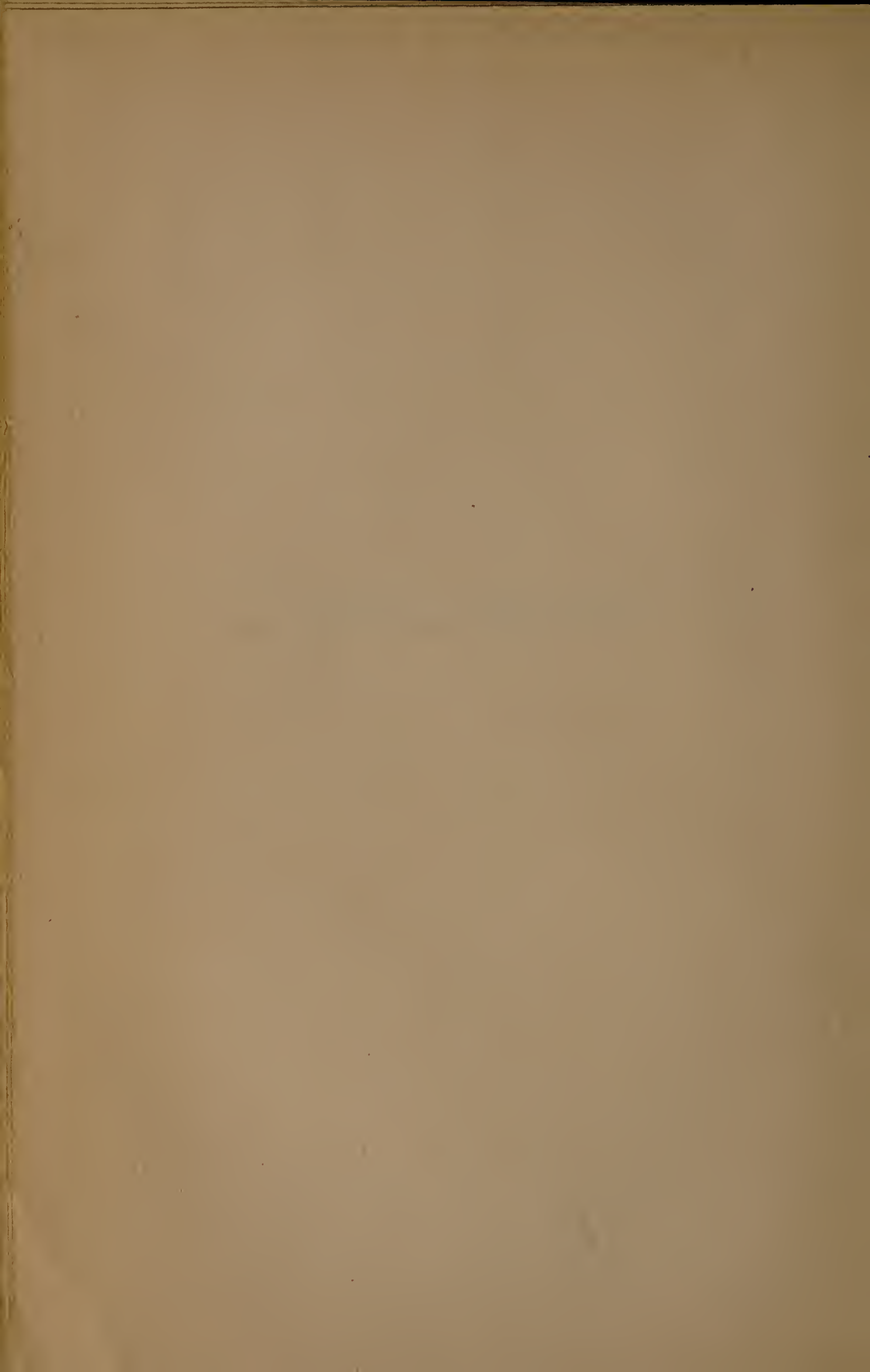
MARGARET.

Headley, Hants.

July 4, 1920.

To Gerald Cumberland my best thanks for his revision of my book.
It owes much clarity to his honest criticism.

HIDDEN LIVES



HIDDEN LIVES

CHAPTER I

WHERE the shapes of the pithead rose, fantastic, ungainly, unco-ordinated, it seemed as though an idiot child of Titans had been playing a building game with giant blocks, giant "meccano," giant clockwork toys, laid out on a sloping hillock of bluish slag. Here and there grew hopeful coarse grass, grey and smoked; here and there outcrops of ferrous orange gashed the chill cerulean of the slag; here and there, in spring, it was starred with coltsfoots in little patches that, in summer-time, turned to splashes of olive-green leaves on a still day, silvered when a passing wind lifted the gleaming woolly undersides of the leaves upwards for an instant.

To the right stretched the town shawdruck,* a horror of desolation, of brokenness. Always when Francis Reay crossed the shawdruck he closed his eyes for an instant, and had a vision of Job the Patient, tormented by pain and ill counsellors, sitting among the potsherds of his ancient city; but the sky above Job was a burning blue, to which he might have turned for cheer. The sky above Shellpit was hidden by the dank smokes and vapours of many industries that stripped the beauty from the stunted trees, making men's souls and bodies stunted and unbeautiful.

No tortured philosopher sat on the shawdruck of Lower Shellpit. On Saturdays children swarmed over it while their mothers cleaned house or went to the factories during the morning; on Saturday afternoons and Sundays big boys, released from pit or workshop, played little mean card games or pitch-and-toss in the condemned cottages that stood, win-

* Rubbish tip.

dowless and doorless, at the edge of the shawdruck, while one boy stood sentry to watch for the police or Mr. Reay, both sworn enemies of gambling. Carts crushed and crunched over the shawdruck, grinding down yellow saggars, fragments of china and earthenware, gold and blue, white and pink, green and red, that squeaked and groaned as wheels and feet went over them. A weary place in a weary land; but to the children, when the sun shone, it was Aladdin's cave with gold and rubies, diamonds and sapphires.

Straggling out uncertainly at the edge of the desolation was Ruthers' Row—twelve small cottages, with earth floors and gaping walls, their heads propped despondently in the smoky air, their feet ankle-deep in ashes and garbage. A few thin fowls, with dirty, broken feathers, scratched in the dust and came sociably into the houses; against one wall was a home-made rabbit-hutch, dripping moisture; a Belgian hare, in the last stage of foot-rot, limped about the cage on three tormented stumps; three Aylesbury ducks paddled in a leaking drain at the bottom of the road; on the wall of the second house a restless thrush with a broken wing—the cause of its imprisonment—beat its bill on the wires of a small cage.

Ruthers' Row was not quite so bad as to be uninhabitable, though Dr. Clevion said it was. She had written to the *Daily Comet* about the cottages; she had brought the sanitary inspector to see them, and had been to the Borough Council Meeting to cross swords with the great men of the town when a patient of hers had died of pneumonia in the end house. Most people said that that was just like a woman doctor, sticking her nose into everything; they never had agreed with woman doctors, anyhow; they were all right for confinements, perhaps—but there seemed something even immodest and improper in a woman doctor either killing or curing a man of pneumonia; besides, there was no need to go making all this fuss now, just when the new Italianate garden in front of the Town Hall was taking everyone's energies. The man, Bob Saunders, would have died in any case; he had always been weakly. He had had influenza and been out of work for weeks; as soon as he could crawl, he had gone back to the

forge to escape his wife and his home. That morning he had started out early, and could not eat the leathery piece of cheese he had toasted before the fire for his breakfast; he had worked his shift through dreamily, while his heart babbled of green fields and his clothes were wet with the sweat of weak effort. Then he was lying in bed listening dreamily to the soft rippling of a brook and his wife's tongue clacking all the time. As a boy, Bob had been a Catholic; lying there, his face on the black sateen pillows—a local device to save washing—his calloused hand picking at the grey blanket, he thought fantastically that she was saying a rosary, so unceasing, so breathless, so monotonous was her voice. But each "Ave" was a curse, each "Gloria" a string of oaths bubbling up from her harassed soul.

Mr. Reay had brought Dr. Clevion to see him, but the brook was trickling so musically over the pebbles in his brain that he could not hear what she said; he could only smile at the kindness in her eyes, and the firm coolness of her fingers on his failing pulse, and then choke his way out of life as the brook altered its course, went over him and took away his breath. And she, in a fury against the mildewed walls and earth floors of Ruthers' Row, had raged her way from the sanitary inspector to the local paper, and thence to the Borough Council.

On the day that Bob Saunders was buried Ruthers came to see her. They gave Bob a good funeral on the Club money, with his six children decorously happy in the first new clothes they had ever had; proud of the swishing tails of the funeral horses, of the nodding plumes of the hearse; they watched interestedly as the coffin, brightly varnished, splashed down into two feet of clayey water in the cemetery. When Mr. Reay's beautiful voice spoke of their father as his "dear brother," and seemed to suggest that he might live again, they looked furtively at the new black clothes, wondering whether they would be allowed to keep them if that shiny box opened and Dad came out, grey-faced and coughing and nattered. That, perhaps, was why they hurried back so quickly to Ruthers' Row to make sure of the funeral feast before a

glorious resurrection should make a hoax of it. But Bob Saunders was thoroughly dead, and Ruthers, coming fur-coated in his famous claret-coloured car from the old, beautiful mansion on Brompton Avenue to see Dr. Clevion and stop her disgraceful slanders about his property, stood coughing, white-faced, blue-lipped, in her little white drawing-room that overlooked the smoky graves in Shellpit Old Churchyard.

She had been to Bob Saunders' funeral. Afterwards she walked from the grave to the cemetery entrance with Francis Reay in his cassock, his surplice and stole thrown over his arm; her diagnostic glance had been drawn to his thin hands holding the book of the Burial Service. She had noticed how his shoulders dropped as though they were burdened as he stood by the grave; more uneasily still she had noticed how his eyes glowed and burned as he spoke to the unmourning mourners in the words of the Prayer-book:

. . . "As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. . . . Christ the first-fruits; and afterwards they that are Christ's——"

But the mourners wanted to get back to Ruthers' Row and the food; as the doctor and the priest walked slowly through the bleak cemetery she looked across the canal and the slag heaps towards the cottages, and said bluntly:

"Mr. Reay, what's the good of all that—that Burial Service? What's the good of saying that in Christ they shall all be made alive? Do you really think they can possibly want to be made alive, when all they get out of life is a place like Ruthers' Row? It's so foolish, so futile, the whole thing——"

"But, doctor——" he began, gently, wondering where and how to start on her conversion: she was too quick-brained for him.

"How on earth can Bob Saunders want anything more to do with life? Always sick, always nagged, always overworked and half starved. Heavens, I should think he'd pray for annihilation! He and his wife and the six children never met without quarrelling, they're so thoroughly raked up against each

other. Born by accident, poor wretches, and clinging blindly to life by instinct——”

They had left the third-class ground of the cemetery now, and were passing a gravestone, a pretentious affair of red granite, very obviously of first-class importance, with several glass excrescences covering artificial white flowers. On the granite, in gold letters, was graven:

“In ever affectionate memory of my beloved husband,

WILLIAM WALTON,

of the Bull and Thorn Hotel, Upper Shellpit,
who fell asleep in Jesus, April 4th, 1909,
aged 49.

*Though after my flesh worms destroy my body, yet I know
that in my flesh I shall see God.”*

“Look at that!” said Dr. Clevion, pointing to the plethoric tablet. “Did you know Walton?”

Francis Reay shook his head.

“In my flesh I shall see God!” she quoted, with hot scorn. “What impudence! A hideous lump of adipose drunkenness, pink and flabby—sixteen or seventeen stone of it. He died—oh, beastly! Of course, I wasn’t his doctor—it was long before my time; but I am treating his widow, who told me all about him. A thing like that to think of resurrection of the body because Christ rose from the dead!”

She stopped, suddenly inarticulate in her indignation.

“You don’t believe in Christ, doctor?” said Francis Reay, smiling at her wistfully.

“I believe in things that are demonstrable,” she said, shortly. “Things like—like Harvey and Lister, people who clean up diseases of body and mind. But really, since I’ve been here I think I’m getting to believe in the old-fashioned, concrete devil.”

“If you believe in the devil,” he said, calmly, “you’ll soon

believe in Christ. You'll find Christ a power infinitely cleansing and purifying in people's lives, doctor."

They had reached the end of the road leading from the gates to the cemetery chapel. Another funeral, with plumes and flowers and mourners, was approaching. He stood in silence until it had passed, his face darkened by the pity of death, hers keen, a little indignant, for it was a very small coffin that rested on the hearse, and she felt it a failure, a breach of faith, that a young thing should die.

"I'm open to scientific conviction, Mr. Reay," she said at last, her grey eyes looking into his a little quizzically, her head bent a little forward, sideways, in her characteristic attitude of diagnosis.

"The Spirit bloweth where it listeth," he said, his brown eyes thoughtful. "But—are you very busy, doctor?"

"Very, but not so busy as one could be. The men still fight shy of me, most of them; the women are a little too keen on coming when they have very little the matter. They need sympathy; they prefer sympathy to treatment. They say, 'Being a woman you will understand,' and so on. And then I do the surgical cases at the new Neurological Hospital—operations, accidents, and so on. Dr. Farne, you know, was a great friend of mine before I came here. But—I can spare time to get converted!" she added, laughing a little. "Though—even in the name of friendship I can't come to church very often."

"I don't want to assert my priesthood upon you, doctor," he said, gently. "You have been here now—six months, isn't it?"

She nodded.

"I've watched you all that time," he went on; "you have such splendid weapons! A clean, quick mind, fine courage and strength, great mercifulness—these are the weapons, these and your science, that we need fighting under the banner of Christ. And to-day they are fighting under the banner of—Lister, did you say?"

"Don't you think they're the same thing?" she said, in a

low voice that was drowned as four great coal drays went by. His face was lighted with enthusiasm as he continued:

"The fields are white for harvest; there is great work to be done for Christ and for the souls of men."

He looked round at the factories and pits, with their squat, grotesque ovens and kilns like nipples on the black breast of the earth, surrounded by the festering sores of little cottages, hideous slag heaps and shawdrucks; the queer, discoloured, steaming waters of canals and pools coloured and fouled mysteriously in the process of industry, pressed down upon by a pall of smoke.

"Souls?" she said, with a shrug. "No, I'll leave them to you. I specialize in bodies."

"Temples of the Holy Ghost, yes!" he said, eagerly, clutching at her hand with his that burnt and was a little discoloured from the wet clay he had cast symbolically on Bob Saunders' coffin. "You and I, hand in hand, Dr. Clevion! I, the past, with its mysticism, its inspiration sealed with the blood of the saints! You, the present and the future, clean, cold, hard science! Think what we could do for these people without hope in the world—of all men most miserable, because they have not Christ in their lives!"

She nodded, watching his shining eyes, his cheekbones touched with hectic pink.

"I expect you'll have trouble—panel and club doctors," he said, with a sudden descent to the practical.

"I'm afraid that doesn't worry me as it ought to," she said, laughing. "I rather like trouble. Not peace, but a sword, isn't it? Well, I haven't a sword, but I've a jolly fine case of surgical instruments."

She laughed at him again, said "Good-afternoon" in her abrupt fashion, and turned away.

He went back to the cemetery chapel, putting on his stole as he went; there was a funeral of twin babies at four o'clock; they had lived in a little cottage near the gates of Collington's works, and their mother was in the habit of running home in the middle of the mornings to feed them. Mr. Collington's second wife was a young Frenchwoman who spoke of the Paris

crèches to which the working mothers went every few hours so that their babies might be fed naturally; there was not such a thing as a crèche in the place, but Mr. Collington made it a rule that young mothers who lived near the works might follow this pretty French example, and please his enchanting little new wife. One day the young mother had found her room in flames, the cradle charred, the babies unrecognizable. And now they were being put, both in one shiny little box, into the wet clay.

It wanted still ten minutes to four; over the bleak cemetery the winter twilight was creeping; the sunset, always so beautiful in the thick, refracting atmosphere, was a red ball with veils of pink and gold. The glare from the blast furnaces was lurid crimson and grey over the little village of Napoli. Smoke volleyed from the chimneys, big and little, and hung like a curtain caught up in the sky. As he walked towards the funeral party, Francis Reay whispered the prayer for Christ's Church militant here on earth. When he saw, later, the father standing at the head of the small grave, in decent cheap black suit and the flaming red tie and badge that proclaimed him a Socialist, and the ribbon that lurked a little behind the badge, to show that he had won the D.C.M. in the war, he felt that he had no answer for the unspoken indignation of those close-held thin lips of the man, young and too bitter to feel grieved; or for the tears that the mother wept into her new black-edged handkerchief while ever and again, at the graveside, she held the cross of small, rather faded white narcissi, swaying as though she were rocking a baby to sleep, white and flushed by turns with the pain of her suddenly swollen breasts.

He spoke to them after the Burial Service of the Good Shepherd who carries the lambs in his robe—and the woman sobbed uncontrollably.

"I dunna want no Good Shepherd for 'ave my kids, Master Reay!" she cried. "I want them, mesen! Oh, if you cud 'a' seen young Sam, Master Reay! The cheeky way 'e'd look at me when he were suckin', an' put out 'is little blob of a tongue, an' gurgle at me!"

"I know—I know," half whispered the priest.

"An' they wun that different! Like as two peas for look at, but as different as chalk an' cheese i' their ways! Sam were always saucy, and Millie 'd look at me that solemn, an' punch at me wi' 'er little 'ands, an' then tuck them down under me bosom, an' go to sleep——"

The grim young man took her by the arm.

"Come on 'ome, missus. It's cold an' damp in 'ere. There'll be a fire——"

She shivered and moaned.

"And us'll leave 'em 'ere!" she cried, and moaned again with the pain in her breast.

"Don't you think," said Francis Reay, very gently, "that God will keep your little ones safe for you? This great love of yours, that gave your babies their flesh, came from Him in the beginning. Do you think, now that they are removed from it, they will go unloved? In His presence is fulness of joy——"

"Oh, dunna come th' blasted parson," growled the young man. "If this God o' yourn loved 'em, why did 'E let 'em get burnt up? Eh?"

"His ways are not our ways——"

"No! *We'n* got more sense o' justice," said the father, and the mourners turned away.

Dr. Clevion was facing pale little Ruthers in her drawing-room, which was also her waiting-room. She had seen his claret-coloured car as soon as she, turned the corner of St. Mary's Road, and scented strife. But she did not know that he had been waiting for her a whole hour, and that men had been sacked from his factory for keeping him waiting a minute. His indignation against her libels on his property had been exacerbated by his annoyance with her for being out when he chose to visit her. When, serene and cool, she came into the room, taking off her gloves and revealing firm, white hands, he began to bluster. She was four inches taller than his five feet five; that annoyed him, as it annoys many men.

She went across the room, lighted the gas fire and rang the bell. Then she carefully replaced some ranunculus in a little silver pot on the table, overturned by his dashed-down gloves and stick. When the maid appeared she ordered tea.

"Lizzie, you should have lit the fire," she said. Then, turning to Ruthers she went on: "I do hope you're not cold. I am, very. I have just come from the funeral of that tenant of yours about whom we are going to quarrel after tea."

"How the devil you dare——" gasped out Ruthers between coughs. She looked at him, and thought how pitiful he was, struggling for breath and only half finding it.

"Saunders had a cough," she said, casually. "Like that."

"To hell with Saunders!" he spluttered.

"You still believe in hell?" she said, in mock reproof. "And—how ill you must be, to talk so rudely!"

"I don't believe—unwomanly women!" he stuttered, as the maid came in with the tea-tray and drew the little table close to the fire. "How dare you interfere in matters that don't concern you? My houses are like everyone else's—they have been lived in for fifty years."

"Quite!" she said, coolly, holding a lump of sugar in the tongs and looking at him inquiringly as she poised it over his tea-cup.

"It's not your business!" he cried, banging his knee at each word; "what are the sanitary authorities for?"

"That's exactly what I want to know," she said, calmly, and he began to cough again until his face was bluish and the veins in his forehead were distended. She left him quietly, returning presently with a small glass in her hand.

"Drink this!" she ordered. He motioned her away peremptorily, and went on fighting for his breath, his lips going grey.

"Oh, don't be a fool!" she said; "do you think I'm particularly keen on doing anything for you?"

At that he seized the draught and swallowed it obediently.

She took his limp hand in hers for a moment. As soon as a little colour had ebbed back into his face, she said brusquely:

"Get on that couch and lie down. I don't want you to collapse here."

He lay there still, staring at her doggedly.

She sat down, took up a paper and pretended to be reading

it. She was studying him as she did so, leisurely drinking her tea. Suddenly she said:

"Who is your doctor?"

"Don't believe in them—filling their damned pockets out of me," he mumbled.

"There's no time for any doctor to fill his damned pockets out of you, Mr. Ruthers," she said, quietly. "Do you realize how very ill you are?"

"This—damned cough—and a touch of giddiness. It's only the weather."

"It's not 'only' anything," she said, slowly. "You are desperately ill. Some day when you get into one of these tempers, you will drop dead. You ought never to go near the works—an uncontrolled man like you needs to be under strict discipline, otherwise you'll get into a rage and kill yourself! You ought to rest——"

"The doctor's panacea!" he sneered; "an excuse for slacking."

"Poor Saunders! I suppose he was slacking!" she said, looking at him reflectively.

"His class usually does," he snapped, "and gets all the sympathy. If Saunders and the likes of him had one-half the backbone and endurance of men like me——"

She drew her chair closer, and, leaning forward, looked into his face searchingly.

"Have you heard what people in the town say about you?" she asked, gravely.

"They always say hard things of employers and landlords," he told her, with a wan smile.

"Yes, but I'm not thinking of that now. They say 'Ruthers is a dying man!' They know more about you than you know yourself."

His jaw dropped. He stared at her and began to cough. This time her quick eye caught the little bright stain on the handkerchief he put to his mouth. After a few moments she spoke again, very gently.

"I was going to fight you, Mr. Ruthers, but I can't fight a sick man, however justly. We're so cruel to each other, most

of us, aren't we? And it's such a facile, unproductive thing, this cruelty——"

He stared at her, a little nonplussed. Then his mind switched back to the important thing.

"Do you really mean that I'm as ill as that?" he gasped.

"I do. I would like you to see Sir Luke Wayne, of Wimpole Street. Your illness is very obvious to me. Your lungs need the bright invigoration of a place like Davos Platz. But I'm not at all sure that your worn-out heart would stand it—even the journey, and the exhilaration."

No more was said of Bob Saunders. Ruthers got into the claret car a terrified man, carrying a telegram to despatch in Dr. Clevion's name to Sir Luke Wayne. Two days later the great man came to the old, sad mansion on Brompton Avenue—a week later "Local Gossip" in the *Daily Comet* told that Mr. Ruthers had gone to Switzerland for his health.

CHAPTER II

ACTING on Reay's advice, Dr. Clevion took the two best rooms of No. 1, Sharlock Street, half a minute from the Mission. The old woman who cleaned the Mission lived in the cottage, a queer, stunted old thing without a nose; sometimes she wore a bandage horizontally bisecting her face, hiding the ancient scar and the lupus stain on her cheek. Sometimes the bandage was not worn, and her face was fully disclosed. Neat grey hair protruded from beneath an old lace cap, and bright brown eyes peered over the twisted cicatrix where her nose had been; her back was bent; about her shoulders a plaid shawl was tightly drawn. No one would have her charring or doing any other work in the factory because of her disfigurement. Reay, however, allowed her to clean his Mission church. Christ, whose visage was marred more than any man's, would, he told her, welcome her there.

The big parish church of Shellpit was beautifully and coldly dignified in its emptiness; on Sunday evenings the Mission was filled. But that was in the days before the Picture Palace had grown up out of the draggled husk of an old Primitive Chapel at the corner of Sharlock Street. People came to the Mission for many reasons. Some of them liked the singing; some liked the warmth; some wanted to keep in the priest's good books because he was so useful in unspiritual ways. An imbecile girl went there because, behind the stove given to the Mission by Mr. Reay's aunt, was a picture of St. Sebastian suffering martyrdom; his quivering flesh was transfixed with arrows from which spurted goutts of blood, and his face was drawn and lined with agony. A long time afterwards, when the imbecile girl's grandfather had been paralyzed for some months, he was found dead in his bed, with knitting needles and skewers and hat-pins stuck in him; the girl was sitting

smiling at him, as she had smiled at St. Sebastian, Saint and Martyr. Mr. Reay had not known that the old cleaner had tacked the picture behind the stove when the walls were painted afresh. There was a tiny leakage of smoke from the chimney-pipe; old Mrs. Winnocks had thought it better the smoke should soil St. Sebastian than her nice clean paint. It was not until the inquest on the old man that Francis Reay knew anything at all about the picture.

One or two people went to the Mission because they loved Christ. As Mr. Reay said, these people found Him a power infinitely cleansing and purifying, even irradiating, in their lives. Half a dozen went for love of the priest—elderly ladies, this half-dozen, well-to-do daughters of colliery owners or manufacturers, who, failing to find an outlet for earthly love, thought they were sublimating it in love of Christ and of souls; seeking to fill empty days, empty nights, empty hands, empty hearts by matins and evensong, parish visiting, magazine distributing, Penny Clubs and a thousand fierce, small jealousies. Dr. Clevion, in her quick, whimsical way, saw through these women, and was going to laugh at them for their self-deception when she found her mercifulness making her heart ache for their neat, fawn-coloured lives. To her one day came one of them, Miss Wembley, forsaking the family doctor.

"It is so wonderful to find a woman doctor to talk to," she said, nervously, discussing physical symptoms with the doctor and then passing on to things she thought were not physical. "A man doctor is so horribly precise, and he—he—*humours* one. And I don't want humouring!"

The doctor watched her thin, white hands with an old-fashioned engagement ring on the third finger of the left hand, four or five modern rings on the other fingers, irritably playing with the ends of her furs.

"I'm so unhappy, doctor! Can you do anything to cure unhappiness?" she added, with a little, wistful smile. "When I tell Dr. Parton that, he says I ought to go to Buxton, or Blackpool, for a month and take it easy! Feed up—lie fallow! Why, that's what I've been doing all my life!"

"How old are you?"

"Forty-one."

This was the first time for years that Miss Wembley had not equivocated about her age.

"You are engaged to be married?"

"I was," she said, hesitatingly, "many years ago."

"And—the man went away?"

"Not—not quite intentionally. My mother died—it was necessary for someone to keep house. I seemed to be the only one—willing."

She sighed gently. The doctor looked thoughtful.

"Life seems so futile," she said, gently. "He is in America now."

"Married?"

"Yes. He has three children."

Again the soft, patient sigh, quickly drawn back.

"And you think about him a good deal?"

"One fights these thoughts," said Miss Wembley, slowly. "But it is very hard. Sometimes, at the Eucharist, when Mr. Reay prays in his beautiful voice about all our hearts being open, all desires known to Almighty God, I dare not go up to the altar. I have to remain sitting in my pew, because even the inspiration of the Holy Spirit cannot cleanse the thoughts of my heart."

She paused and her voice shook. She looked ashamed of herself.

"I don't think your heart can need very much cleansing, Miss Wembley," said the doctor, quietly. She was thinking of forty years' meek submission to parents and teachers; meek surrender of the beloved man at the voice of the Fifth Commandment; gentle ruling of tradespeople and servants in a wealthy home; hungry, meek worship of the Man, Christ Jesus.

"You don't know my thoughts—my dreams," she said, and flushed crimson, lifting her muff to hide her face as the tears came into her eyes. The doctor looked at her keenly.

"You dream about the man in America?"

"Ye-es—and—oh, it's horrible, horrible!"

She was crying now, her gentle dignity all gone. From

behind a fine linen handkerchief, faintly odorous of lavender and sandalwood, came her strangled voice. "Other men, too—men I know, and—men I don't know." It seemed as though the confession, so distressing, had been wrung from her by her despair. The doctor put a cool hand on hers.

"But, my dear girl, there is nothing to be miserable about," she said. Neither noticed any incongruity in thirty years addressing forty-one from such an eminence.

"You cannot have any idea what my dreams are," she sobbed.

"Most people's dreams wouldn't bear repetition," said Helen Clevion, dryly. "You must remember that a dream is like that ancient writing—a sort of hieroglyphic, merely symbolical."

"Yes, but you remember what Our Blessed Lord said when He interpreted the Seventh Commandment, in His Sermon on the Mount? Well, in my dreams I—I—have broken that law times and times! And now I can go to the Eucharist no longer, because I feel unclean. When Mr. Reay's hand—his beautiful thin hand—brings the Bread of the Sacrament to me, I can think only of how I see him in my dreams—no, I cannot go to the Eucharist any more."

She sobbed, meekly, quietly.

"Can you tell me one of the dreams?"

"Oh, not for worlds!" she cried, and shuddered.

"I understand," said the doctor, and nodded. "But it's a pity. It would help."

Miss Wembley fumbled with shaking white hands in her bag, struggling with her shame. At last she looked up.

"I—there is something here," she said, taking out a piece of notepaper. "I—I—really, it was this that brought me to you to-day. I fear that my brain is giving way. I could never tell a man doctor about it. I—can scarcely bear to tell you. And yet—perhaps you can save me."

Suddenly, with a little gesture of absolute despair, she pushed the notepaper across to the doctor and sat, her face buried in her hands.

"It's unbearable—to think there's anything so horrible in one—buried so deep—something uncontrollable."

The doctor's calm eyes glanced down the page and read, in jerked, rapid handwriting that had an extraordinary sense of urgency in it:

Hands of my Love, my Love;
White hands that glimmer palely in the night,
That flutter, like the seeking, homing dove,
And sink to rest, upon my breast,
And with their quiet magic hold me tight—
Hands of my Love, my Love.

Hands of my Dear, my Dear,
Such roving hands that will not let me sleep;
Cruel hands, like eagles' talons hovering near,
To soothe and grasp, and bruise and clasp,
Until with passion's pain I lie and weep.
Hands of my Dear, my Dear——

There was a great deal of it. The doctor sensed all the horror it brought to this woman, nurtured in the prudery of the Victorian home that would not let her, even to her doctor, call the parts and functions of her body by anything but a periphrasis.

"To think I could even think such things!" she cried.

"When did you write it?"

"Last night. I wakened about two o'clock, as I always do. I always had to give father his medicine and milk at two o'clock when he was ill, and I can never pass that hour asleep. I remembered the verses very distinctly, and something urged me to write them down."

"What were you thinking of when you were writing them?"

There was a long, dead silence. At last the word stumbled out.

"Mr. Reay."

"That he would be shocked?"

"Oh—oh no! I was thinking of his hands—his beautiful long hands clasping the chalice. I—I thought that so Christ's hands must have looked when He healed the sick."

"Um—and you think a lot about this man in America?"

"I try not to. He is married. To think of him would be a sin," she said, slowly. "I have tried to put him out of my life."

"So you deliberately fight every thought of him?"

"Yes, every thought. But they come back a thousand times stronger in dreams—even after all these years. I imagine his kisses—we only kissed about three times—I imagine—oh, horrors!"

The doctor smiled faintly.

"But not only of him and Mr. Reay do I dream—horrible men—mean-looking, greasy, gipsy sort of men. Oh, doctor, I'm sure I shall go mad."

"Oh dear, no, you won't, Miss Wembley," said the doctor, briskly. "If you could bring yourself to tell me a dream in detail it would help. But I can imagine them. You cannot tell me because you feel ashamed. You think I'd be shocked. Isn't that it?"

"Yes—it's disgusting. I feel a whited sepulchre."

"Nothing to be ashamed of at all! They are no more disgraceful than the ugliness of lupus, or an abscess—or—or birth. They are, as a matter of fact, spiritual abscesses."

Miss Wembley looked up sharply.

"You see," went on the doctor in matter-of-fact tones, "you ought to have married that man. A good many women, in these days, don't need to marry. Life is full enough for them without marriage. Someone has said that there are four sorts of women—the celibate, the mother, the wife, and the courtesan. Sometimes, of course, you find two or three in one person. You, I feel, would have made a wife; you would have found your spiritual completion in marriage."

Miss Wembley nodded slowly, and held her handkerchief to her trembling lips.

"Every time you think of this man you fight the thought because it seems sinful to you. Every time you think of him the very fighting makes a dint in your brain—that is, of course, speaking very simply and unscientifically. All the time you are conscious it remains a dint. You play golf?" she asked, suddenly.

Miss Wembley nodded, looking surprised.

"This thought of your man is like a very formidable bunker, don't you know? Most of your thoughts go spinning over the bunker with nice, strong, swift strokes while you are awake

and have the thoughts in hand. When you're asleep they all collect in the bunker—don't you see? It's not a bunker any longer. It becomes a mound, a sort of barrow, with dead men's bones in it."

"Yes—yes—I understand," cried Miss Wembley, eagerly. "So, then, I'm not really vile and disgusting?"

"Of course you're not—not in the least. Anything you repress as you have repressed your love for this man has to break out somewhere."

There was another dead silence. Miss Wembley broke it.

"Then what am I to do, to get peace?"

"It depends entirely on what you want with him."

"I shall never see him again," she whispered, and sighed softly.

"I know. But in your thoughts. You want kisses, embraces, all the adorable little excitements of love?"

"Oh, doctor—don't, please!" she cried, holding out her hands as though to ward off something dreadful, and the quick flush dyed her faded cheeks again.

"Of course, if you want those things, you could marry. It might not, perhaps, be what you had dreamed. But you are quite pretty—you have plenty of money. You would be happy——"

"Oh no," she cried. The doctor watched her keenly.

"Then you love him. There is nothing vile or wrong in loving a man."

"He is married," murmured Miss Wembley.

"But if you face the thing squarely, Miss Wembley, tell me—how can it hurt him or anyone who loves him, for you to love him too? You ask nothing for it. You don't even ask to see him."

Once again the silence fell on the room. Miss Wembley's colour came and went, until she burst out passionately:

"I do! I do want more! I know I do. I am growing old, and I never, never have had anything golden or glowing in my life—only three kisses."

The white, delicate hands fell on her lap in a gesture of hopelessness.

"Miss Wembley," said the doctor, solemnly, "do you think many people have things golden or glowing in their lives? I don't. Don't you think, rather, we read in poetry and see idealized in art all these passions until they *look* golden? You think that in this man's kisses you would have found something golden? But—why is not all the world transformed, then? Why is it that people are still unhappy, after they have yielded to this fever of love? Don't you think, rather, that you who have never known it are happier than those who have suffered disillusionment? I do."

"But—for a little time, perhaps, there is a shine," ventured Miss Wembley.

"Yes, but it is mostly physical. It's just a thing of nerves and sensations dressed up by sentiment to seem spiritual, as a rule. The sort of thing, Miss Wembley, that makes the little factory girl go in the park with a boy at night. Yes, I know that is coarse," she added, seeing the look of disgust she had hoped for in Miss Wembley's white face. "We are coarse in this matter. In most other things we're dropping the beast well behind us. In sex it still clings."

Suddenly Miss Wembley shook her head.

"I think of Tennyson, you know—'Oh, let the solid ground not fail beneath my feet, Until my life has found what some have found so sweet.' I find great comfort in Tennyson," she added, and the doctor visioned her sitting pensively watching shadows of the dead Victorian world appear on the mirror of her life.

"Yes, it is sweet," said the doctor, gently, "when it is part of love. The physical fusion of marriage is simply emblematical of the spiritual union. Without that the other love, the love of the flesh, is rather a sordid, futile thing, don't you think?"

The still grey eyes looked into the tragic brown ones and at the face in which the colour came and went with the swift play of emotion. The doctor's face was firm and convincing.

"I think, perhaps, you are right," said Miss Wembley, faintly.

"And the other, the spiritual love, is still left to you, don't you see?" she said, speaking casually.

"Why—yes." Miss Wembley's voice hesitated.

"Nothing—marriage, death, distance—can take that away, Miss Wembley. As for the physical thing, just take it out and look at it. Look all round it. Don't repress it any more. You see, it has been terribly magnetic to you; you speculated on it; you felt yourself a martyr to your home for having given it up; it had the attraction of the unknown and the self-forbidden, hadn't it? But it isn't anything to be ashamed of, you know."

"You mean that?"

"Of course I mean it. A thing so natural, so creative as sexual love cannot be wrong in itself. What is wrong is brooding over it as ascetics do, making it a spiritual abscess. The sane thing is, either to marry—some other man if you can't have the man you want."

"Oh, not that—ever!"

"No! Very well, then. Take this thought of love, look at it quietly, shirking none of its details and implications. Look at all its beastliness and all its beauty, and decide whether you will keep them or dispense with them, just as you decide at spring-cleaning time whether to keep or to do away with all those things stored up on the attic floor, dusty and musty, a harbour for moths. 'You see?' she added, as she stood up.

Miss Wembley tremblingly assented.

"Try to grasp the fact that love—soul, not body-satisfying love—is a constant giving. Love does not live by kisses and sensations and endearments alone, you know."

She looked into Miss Wembley's face and smiled.

"Oh—I believe I'm beginning to see."

"Then come along on Thursday at eleven o'clock for a talk," said the doctor cheerfully.

CHAPTER III

IN Mrs. Saunders' cottage the six children soon grew shabby again. They had not the habit of cleanliness; they had never known the comfort of it. The cheap, new black clothes were laid on chairs in the dusty living-room or hung over the foot of the bed, for there were no cupboards or drawers. The mother went to work in the morning before the children were up, and, finding their old clothes ragged and fastenless, they put on the new ones. Later, the old ones, littering the room, were thrown out at the back of the house and trodden underfoot for a while, finally finding a resting-place on the shawdruck. Soon two of the children had to stay away from school because there was nothing to wear. Their mother worked at the gas-works amongst the coke, earning not quite enough to fill the seven mouths, and coming home every night tired and grimy and foul-smelling, cross with herself, hating the ever-hungry children.

In the house next door, on Good Friday, Amy Willis sat on the fender, gazing with dull eyes at the leaping flames and wreathing smoke, a dull, uncondusive lump of a girl with fat face, loose skin, big, limp mouth and mouse-coloured hair dragged back wispily. She had sat there all day, while outside the sky had looked like an apple of gold in a network of opals; in the soft April air was the stir and tingle of spring. It had been a holiday. On the happier outskirts of the town men and women and decorous children worked on the war-won allotments; in Lower Shellpit children squabbled all day on the shawdruck, and grown-up people, released from work fantastically, because two thousand years ago Christ had died for them, stayed in bed till the first freshness of the morning had gone. At the hour when legend said the ancient, far-away world had chattered about the place of skulls, and then turned

away to make preparations for a coming feast, the people tumbled out of the houses to talk awhile, unwashed, uncombed, in the streets foul with refuse and a-crawl with children. The public-houses grew clamorously busy; from a fried-fish shop in Sharlock Street the smell of boiling oil and hot people came out borne on gusts of steam, and children, eager-eyed and fidgety, waited in queues for the dinner that, later on, they carried home in pieces of newspaper.

In the parish church Francis Reay was holding the Stations of the Cross. He prayed by the altar, draped black and purple in mourning. As he stood there, listening to the mechanical and businesslike mutter of the black-cassocked choir, and the shy rustle of response from the ladies and children of the congregation, the pathos of the wounded Christ almost overwhelmed him. On the ivory-coloured marble of the reredos the Wise Men and the Shepherds adored the young Child; across the chancel the sunshine stained to rainbow colours the plain robe of the young Man Christ, smiling with his friends at the Galilean Marriage Feast. Over the altar the meek Child, the comradely young man, had changed to the agonized Saviour. Reay thought of this as he spoke the Seven Words from the lectern. Dr. Clevion, having passed the church on her way home from the morning's visiting, stabled her car in the garage round the corner, remembering that Reay had got her to promise that she would look in at the Three Hours' Service. She had not been to his church yet, even in the name of friendship; yielding to an impulse, she went inside.

The lame old verger, recognizing her, smiled beamingly, led her well forward amongst the congregation, gave her a book and whispered loudly, "Hymn 114—the hundred and fourteenth hymn," as he left her.

The people were singing a softly melancholy tune; she found the hymn and read it until she came to the verse they had reached. Francis Reay was kneeling to pray before he spoke again.

The doctor held the book in her hand, listening unvolitionally to a woman behind her who was singing with great enjoyment.

"Adenoids," the doctor's brain registered, as the husky, snuffled voice filled her ears, singing:

"How fast His Hands and Feet are nail'd;
His Throat with parching thirst is dried;
His failing Eyes are dimm'd with blood;
Jesus, our Lord, is crucified."

Everybody bowed when they sang "Jesus"; the voice of the woman behind became flatly mellifluous; there was everywhere a smell of kid gloves and eau-de-Cologne. The doctor noticed a fragile little girl out for the first time this week after rheumatic fever, weeping out her pity for Christ's agonies. The doctor-instinct urged her to go and snatch up the little thing, and take her out into the sunshine, away from the appalling hymn; instead, she stood still in her place, feeling indignant.

Then Reay stood up, his hands clasping the edge of the Bible that rested on the outspread wings of a great oaken eagle. He spoke of the pains of the crucified Christ; he insisted on the necessity of pain in order to win salvation.

"Oh, wounded Hands! Hands pierced for our transgressions! Hands that even in death were outstretched to bless those who wounded! Oh, most sacred Feet, quick to run on errands of mercy, bleeding for the cleansing of the whole world."

Helen Clevion listened dreamily; to her, Francis Reay's words came with a sense of shock; she had thought all that sort of religion had been done away with now; there was something mediæval in it. Her mind wandered back to school-days when she had to go to church; she found herself speculating as to why the name of Christ had always brought blood with it when He Himself had been the prophet of loving-kindness. Blood—all through history, beginning with the blood on Calvary! It seemed as though Calvary had set a scarlet river flowing through history, the blood of martyrs, the blood of persecutors of the faith too. She saw a picture of the First Crusade as she had seen it at school in an illuminating lecture—a reckless, weary rabble, fighting its way across Europe, drenched first in the blood of Christian and Infidel

alike until it had waded knee-deep up to the simple cave where they had laid Him, the Peacemaker.

“Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sins! Vicarious suffering is the highest ideal of fallen humanity! Christ, the Holy One of God, came down on earth that He might take the burden of our iniquities on Himself, the stainless suffering for the stained, and teach humanity through countless ages to come that when the innocent suffer for the guilty a double blessing is gained; the sufferer becomes divine, the guilty becomes clean and pure. As in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.”

His eyes glowed as he looked round on the congregation, and Helen sat listening to what, to her common sense, seemed heresy. When the people stood to sing the next hymn she slipped quietly out of church, doubtfully uncomfortable both about Reay and the church. It had sickened her vaguely; to her, so used to sights of suffering, there was something indecently morbid about this greedy indulgence in unproductive pity for physical suffering; it reminded her of a hypochondriac trotting out symptom after symptom for his doctor's edification. There was something a little incongruous, too, in this decorous, well-dressed congregation being, in church, so communistically anxious to show their admiration for Christ, and yet afraid to mention Him outside the church porch, but only too anxious to get back to a delayed midday dinner of penitential salt fish, or an early tea of spiced, crossed buns. This religion of a suffering God seemed a thing they kept air-tight in their church.

And all the day Amy Willis sat hunched on the fender of the house in Ruthers' Row trying to hide pain and fear. The searching spring sunshine had streamed in on the dirt-scarred floor, on the piles of dishes unwashed for a week, and on the ashes in the hearth that looked as though soon they would find their own way out of doors. At noon her mother, released from her work at the coke yard, had screamed to one of the Saunders children to fetch bread and brawn and pickles from the shop at the corner. There had followed a terrific row in the street, because the child had stolen a slice of brawn and a pickle on her way home; Mrs. Willis and Mrs. Saunders

defended, the one her dinner, the other her child, with tooth and claw. Then Amy and her mother and her father had eaten the flabby pink stuff sullenly, washing it down with strong tea, and the mother had gone out.

So the girl returned to sit and scorch by the enormous fire. On a bursting mattress in the corner two babies lay; sometimes one of them cried out loudly and protestant; the other kept on an incessant soft whimpering. Both belonged to Amy's sisters, girls who had got into trouble and been lucky enough to nail the man down for a weekly four shillings. One of them, the mother of the strong baby, was in service in Manchester; the other was working on Collington's, and the baby's father was one of the pit lads who played pitch-and-toss in the same condemned cottages where, last year, they had done their courting.

In a wooden, ladder-backed chair by the fire opposite Amy sat her father. Like the room, he looked dirty. His face was yellowish grey, his lips were purple and loosely open, his eyes dull and fishy. A short black beard covered his thin jaw; from the edges of the wooden chair-arms on which he rested his elbows, his bony wrists hung sickeningly at right angles to his arms, the fingers curved. He was paralyzed with lead poisoning.

Neither father nor daughter spoke; each dull face was expressionless save for an overspreading stratum of misery and hopelessness, a settled depression; even when a convulsive twitch of Amy's limbs, and a dilation of her dull eyes that made them momentarily black, showed loss of muscular control and pain dully borne, neither spoke; the fire roared and flapped, the baby whimpered, and, outside, dull reverberations told that blasting was going on in the pit during the day's holiday.

At last the door opened and Mrs. Willis came in—an earthy-coloured, mountainous woman with backbone of excessive concavity; she waddled from the hips. She had a large grey shawl over her head and shoulders; from its folds she produced two black stout bottles and a small, flat flask, which she laid on the table. Another woman, small and thin and mild-faced,

followed her. She shivered as she closed the door and stood in the stifling heat of the room.

Amy sat motionless.

"Bit parky, eh, master, for Good Friday?" said the thin woman.

The man's loose mouth moved involuntarily, his eyelids quivered, but he made no attempt to speak. The thin woman put down a greasy paper parcel on the table, and the smell of fish and oil mingled with the other odours.

"Stir the fire, Amy, stir the fire," said her mother, and the girl stirred the dusty fire until it sent out clouds of ash to settle over everything. The movement made her double in sudden pain: her mother looked from her to Mrs. Wall significantly, and gave a short laugh. They both sat down at the table and Mrs. Willis poured stout from a black bottle into two mugs, adding a dog's-nose of gin to each.

"'Ave a sup, father?" she asked, turning to the man.

He blinked at her and went on staring at the fire.

"Give 'im a sup, poor old devil," said Mrs. Wall, in a low voice, putting some of the fish and chips from the paper on to a saucer, sprinkling them with vinegar and going across the room with them. He made his paralyzed arms tremble with an effort to move, but could not raise them, and looked into her face wistfully. She fed his loose mouth with the food; he ate it slowly and incompletely, like a baby. His eyes were on the black bottle; Mrs. Wall brought him a drink. Amy took the enamelled teapot from the hob where it had been stewing all day and poured out a cup of tea, adding a little condensed milk to the bitter stuff.

The baby from Manchester cried lustily, and Mrs. Wall, after enduring the noise for a time, lifted him on to her knee.

"Dear lamb!" she said, for she had been drinking considerably that day, and was becoming sentimental.

"He'll want 'is pobs," said his grandmother, and, going across to the hob, she took up a leprous saucepan into which smuts and ash had fallen all day. There was a cupful of boiled bread in it; she added a little condensed milk and sugar

and began to feed the baby, who sat up, laughing at her and gurgling joyously.

"Little lamb!" said Mrs. Wall again.

"Comin' on well, this 'un is. I dunna mind when they come on well. But that little varment!"—and she jerked her head towards the mattress where the other baby whimpered weakly—"I shall never rare 'im, not in a month o' Sundays; but I want to keep the life in 'im, as the saying is——"

Mrs. Wall nodded her sympathetic understanding.

"Eight bob a week isna picked up on every currant bush, Mrs. Whatsyername," went on the grandmother. The baby choked with the rapid feeding; its grandmother wrapped one finger in the corner of her apron. "Thrush somethink cruel, 'e 'as—always givin' me a job wi' 'im, chokin'." She rubbed the sore off the baby's gums, waited until his cries were diminished, and added a little gin to the bread and milk. "Soothes their little stomachs something wonderful," she remarked, her eyes falling on the rapidly lessening pile of fish and chips. "'Ere, steady on, Mrs. Whatsyername—if yo' did stand th' fish an' chips, I stood th' booze." Mrs. Wall stopped her too ardent attention to the food, and Mrs. Willis helped herself with her fingers. The baby gobbled the bread and milk greedily, liking its flavouring of gin, and presently fell into a sleep of drugged repletion. Mrs. Willis laid him back on the mattress and took up the weakly one.

"It isna as if it cosses much for feed 'em," she went on, while Mrs. Wall, to be on the safe side, tore the paper in halves and divided the fish and chips in equal portions. "Master Reay's landlady gives me the pieces of bread, and the Rector's lady gives me a couple o' tins o' milk a week, and we all manage for live out o' that, as you may say, for put in us tea. Really and truly, the eight bob a week is found money——"

The baby's red-lidded eyes opened, its blue-white face puckered, and its minute hand made some futile movements to an ugly mark on the thin neck. A fat brown insect ran from under its nightgown, and Mrs. Willis transferred it between finger and thumb to the fire.

"I've sometimes wished mine was daughters," said Mrs. Wall, pensively; "eight bob a week found money!"

The baby whimpered, refusing the bread and milk. Mrs. Willis shook her head as she laid it down beside the other one, who slept heavily.

"No, I doubt we shanna rare that one," she said, shaking her head.

"Well, what I'm always saying is, if they're took when they're young they're took from the north to come," said Mrs. Wall, comfortingly, as she poured herself another glass of stout. "An'," she added in a whisper, "there'll be Amy's comin' along wi' its four or five bob a week to take its place."

Mrs. Willis's eyes were anxiously on the bottle; she drank noisily to hide her embarrassment.

There was a long silence; the old man on the hearth sat with trembling lips, gazing into the fire. Once Mrs. Wall, struck with pity for him, wiped his damp chin with her apron.

"'Ave for wear a bib, dad," she laughed, shaking her head at him reprovingly, "dribbling like a babby!"

He went on staring into the fire. Amy moved about uneasily once or twice on the fender, and went out of the room.

Mrs. Wall leaned confidentially across to Mrs. Willis.

"If you was to ask me, now, I'd say as that wench's time 'ad come."

The mother nodded.

"Well, if yo' dunna get it out of 'er now,—yo' know, when they're i' pain an' frightened they let their tongues wag——"

"Our Amy's a 'pinionated madam!" began Mrs. Willis.

"Well, if yo' wuz to say as yo'd turn 'er out, kid an' all, into th' Bastile, she'd tell fast enough. Go on, I would. Why should yo' 'ave another kid for keep, an' no maintenance?"

Amy crept back to the room after a while, and sat down again. The women looked at her.

"Go on!" nodded Mrs. Wall, encouragingly.

Mrs. Willis looked at Amy and said loudly:

"Look 'ere, my wench, are yo' goin' for tell us 'is name, or are yo' not?"

"Yo' know as I shanna tell," said the girl from between her hunched shoulders.

"Well, then, to th' Bastile yo' go, an' that sharp," said Mrs. Willis. The women exchanged encouraging glances.

"I shanna go i' th' Bastile, and I shanna tell—so there!" retorted Amy, making a grimace at her mother.

In all her dull brain was only one thought; she wanted to get away, to escape from this all-surrounding dirt and squalor and disease. Her way of escape, it seemed, lay through the boy who so incomprehensibly had fallen in love with a thing so unattractive as she; she had sought to hold him, pathetically eager to please, wistfully grateful for his notice, the only kindly notice she had ever had; she would have been burned alive rather than tell his name, bring him to the shame of the Court, bring upon him the weekly fine of four shillings. How could she expect him to love her, to marry her, if she brought him, so soon, trouble and loss and distress? He had been very cross with her when she told him of her condition: he had called it "darn' bad luck," and said they had better not meet again; but she had soothed him, tried to make him forget it. Latterly, when she had had to leave work, and her clothes had grown bedraggled, and she had slunk about the streets the picture of dejection, she had not met him. Other girls had told her, gloatingly, that he was "going with" one and another, but she felt sure of her power of winning him back if only she could keep him from trouble.

"Just what I thought, as yo'd defy me, miss!" cried her mother. "Very well, then. By dinner-time to-morrow yo' clear out, d'year? An' there's not a soul as wouldna uphold me—bringing disgrace on my house, after all the struggle I've had for kip yo' tidy an' respectable nigh on seventeen year!"

The baby on the mattress whimpered, and Amy laughed out loud at her mother's sudden virtue.

"I should tell if I was you, Amy," said Mrs. Wall, comfortingly. "Yo' cannot expect any mother for 'ave all this trouble wi'out a bob or two to wet it! Why shud th' woman always pay, an' 'im get off? It'll cost him four or five bob a week—but look what yo've got for go through!"

"Canna be 'elped," said the girl, dully.

"But if yo' go i' th' Bastile, yo've no idea of the things they do to yo', Amy. They'll cut off all yo'r hair, for one thing, an' make yo' like a convic'. An' they mek yo' 'ave a bath wi' half a dozen folks i' th' room, laughin' at yo'."

Amy shuddered, and the two women exchanged winks. Mrs. Willis nodded.

"Go on," she whispered, pouring more stout into Mrs. Wall's cup. "Yo'll fatch her yet."

"An' they strap yo' down i' th' bed when yo'r pains come on yo', an' a whole lot o' students and nurses come round stickin' knives an' pins in you, to see if yo' bleed. An' then they give you drugs——"

"I canna help it," moaned Amy, the tears beginning to trickle down her cheeks.

"But yo' canna hide it i' th' Bastile, because them drugs what they give yo' makes yo' talk. They asks yo' questions, an' yo'll answer like shellin' peas. You 'ave for answer truthful, because it's like being mesmerized."

There was a long silence, and Mrs. Willis added:

"Then they'll send the police to 'is place o' work, after 'im, and a nice fool he'll look."

There was a long, tense silence. Mrs. Willis moved across the room and put on more coal. Amy's tongue moistened her dry, cracked lips: she poured out more of the black tea into her cup and gulped it thirstily. Her gaze went round the room searchingly; she knew that she was already ill, for her sisters had talked long and loudly about all the sensations and symptoms of childbirth; she knew her mother's pitiless acquisitiveness, and guessed at all sorts of vague powers possessed over her by the Union officials and the police. If only she could stave them off for a little while, until afterwards! Her eyes, searching despairingly round the kitchen for some loophole of escape, stopped suddenly at her father's dropped hands, his dull eyes and trembling mouth. She jerked herself round, wiped the tears from her face and said harshly, with a terrible look of triumphant cruelty:

"Yo' really want for know 'is name?"

Her mother stared at her. Mrs. Wall nodded encouragingly.

"Ask 'im," she said, nodding her head towards her father, who blinked at her foolishly, opening his mouth widely, and laughing, showed blue, toothless gums.

"Tch! tch!" said Mrs. Wall, shocked.

The mother stared for an instant. The next, grasping the stout bottle by the neck, she had darted across to Amy and was beating her about the head and body with it. The girl did not move. Mrs. Wall watched eagerly and appraisingly, her face a little flushed, her eyes dilating at each blow; the father sat laughing feebly at the woman's red, shiny face, down which her moist hair was trailing, as he tapped his one whole leg on the ground in time to the beats. With her elbows on her knees, protecting her head with her hands while blood poured over her hair from one split finger, Amy sat motionless and silent, until the bottle caught on the edge of the grate and splintered into fragments. Then the woman sat down, panting and mountainous.

"Fou'pence on that blasted bottle," she panted. "Oh, the dirty lyin' little 'ound."

"I should be annoyed mesel' if my old man was to——"

"Do yo' believe her?" screamed Mrs. Willis. "Why, ask any bloomin' doctor yo' like! That's the one crownin' blessing o' th' lead—there's never no kids i' th' question. An' accusin' her own father!"

"I don' know what the world's comin' to," said Mrs. Wall, still trembling a little from her violent excitement at watching the beating. "Let's wet it! I will—being as it's Goo' Friday."

She counted out money from her pocket, and took up the unbroken bottle.

"Fou'pence gone for nothing," said Mrs. Willis, angrily, looking at the fragments of glass. The church clock struck nine. "There, now—we canna get nothin' to-night. It's like Sunday hours," she said, and turned to Amy to vent her disappointment.

"And now to th' Bastile yo' go, me lady—it's a dirty bird fouls its own nest! I wouldna have yo' here now, not if yo' was to pay me ten bob a week for th' child."

"Yo're right!" said Mrs. Wall with an air of profundity.

"But I shanna go i' th' Bastile," said Amy, looking up tearless, with dry, dilated eyes. "If I do, they'll see what yo' done on me—an' then yo'll get landed, for layin' on a girl like this, a few hours afore her's confined."

"I wisht I'd have laid yo' out," stammered the woman. Slowly, and with trembling fingers, Amy unfastened her frock at the back, showing a torn rag of grey underclothing and raised white weals with red shadows, and here and there broken edges on the tough yellow skin.

"Black and blue to-morrow," she said, complacently, as she fastened the frock again and stood up stiffly, moving sluggishly across the floor towards the stairs ladder. On the lowest step she stopped, and turned to her mother with a grin that was distorted by pain.

"Did yo' i' th' eye then, eh?"

Mrs. Willis swore violently. Amy put out her tongue at her and shut the stairs door.

For a long time the women sat talking. The man went up to bed and Mrs. Willis helped him to undress. Amy had barricaded the door of the other room with her bed, the only article of furniture in it; she was now lying down, her face smothered in the old ragged blanket and coat that formed the bedclothes. She was aching in every inch of her body, but it did not cause her much discomfort: there was a sort of savage exultation in being beaten—she was used to it. She had determined to bear the pains of birth with similar silent exultation, for she had been sickened at the noise her sisters had made. On the night the weakly baby was born there had been such a noise that a crowd of semi-jocular neighbours had collected in the street below. Amy dared not make any noise for fear her mother should hear her and send the police to take her to the workhouse. But she found, after a time, that this sort of pain lacked the fierce excitement of a beating; there was not the creeping of the flesh, the savagely expectant thrill, the hot sting and the wild weakness of exhaustion about it. So she buried her face in the mattress and stuffed her hand in her mouth, forcing herself to quietness; it was not until her child had

been in the world ten minutes, and she was quite sure of having scored off her mother, that she let herself be frightened, and shrieked to her to come.

All that night, and the next softly shining day, she lay in the dirty room, rated at, aching, sick and frightened. The baby lay beside her and, towards night, began to whimper with its first dull hunger sensation. The baby from Manchester bawled lustily downstairs and, because it was Saturday night, was bathed; the other little one whined and moaned and grew ominously quiet. Mrs. Wall came in again, advising Amy, as a friend, to placate her mother. But she turned her face sullenly away, only asking for water so that she might wash herself.

She felt no love towards the child; even its fragility, its helplessness, won nothing from her. Her smattering of schooling had destroyed the instinct that would have caused her to mother her child, but had not implanted reasoned love in her mind. Yet, as she felt its weak movements beside her, and listened to the cousins downstairs, she felt vaguely that something was wrong; she was unhappy and ill; she loathed all the surrounding dirt and wretchedness. There might be a reason for her misery; she supposed that she had sinned; Mr. Reay had told her so one day when he had come to the house and, seeing her condition, had prayed with her and her father. Quite conceivably her misery was punishment for something; yet through her mind wandered the thought that always she had been miserable, even before that sin between her and the boy Dick. But she felt too tired, too ill to argue with herself, to follow thoughts to their logical conclusion; all she felt was that there was something wrong that these three babies should be born to such sadness and sordidness, for they had had no chance yet to sin at all.

She lay still, with the door open. She smelt black pudding being cooked and chips being warmed up in the oven odorously; she heard the dull "plomp" of big stout bottles being put down on the table, and the mumbled chattering of her father as he tried to say he was hungry. Her mother and Mrs. Wall were feeding.

"Best take Amy a scrap o' this 'ere pig pudding," said Mrs. Wall.

Mrs. Willis swore loudly.

"Let her get her dinners where her got her kid," she said, and stuffed her mouth with food. After a while Mrs. Wall came up with a small portion of her own meal, but Amy turned from it in disgust. She looked wild and feverish; Mrs. Wall was dimly troubled about her.

"I'd put down a bit or two if I was you, Amy," she said.

"I canna, Mrs. Wall. It's same as if I'm turned agen food," said Amy.

"Yo've got two for feed now," began Mrs. Wall.

Amy turned away from her; Mrs. Wall took the food downstairs and ate it herself.

The stout went from bottle to cup; Mrs. Wall fed the old man, who liked black pudding; his eyes gleamed as he ground the lumps of white fat toothlessly. Amy, listening dully, heard the bell of the parish church tolling. It was preparation for to-morrow's Easter Eucharist. Fifty boys and girls, confirmed recently, would be taking their First Communion among the fragrance of the Easter lilies to-morrow morning. Mr. Reay had got Amy, almost by force, to a few Confirmation classes in the autumn, but the Rector had visited her mother to question her about the girl's condition—and she could go no longer. To-morrow would have been her First Communion. She liked the church and the lilies; she loved the chequered lights that came through the stained windows on to the Adoration of the Magi; she felt sorry for the tortured Christ; to see Him hanging there in agony gave her the same thrill as her mother's beating. She would have liked to go to the Communion Service on Easter Day, early in the morning.

Presently, amidst the "glug-glug" of drinking, the crackle made by teeth on the frizzled skin of the black pudding, she caught a word that petrified her. It was the one word "Dick"—evidently Mrs. Willis had been making inquiries that day among Amy's mates.

"Quite respectable folks," came Mrs. Willis's voice. "His father's a shop steward on Weddell's——"

"Well afford to pay," murmured Mrs. Wall.

Amy's heart stood still. Then they had found out! She had always so carefully kept Dick from her terrible mother; he did not even know exactly where she lived; he did not know that she was so poor, so low-down in the world, as this. And now her mother would go in her old shawl, fat and greasy, smelling of filth and beer, and swear and make scenes—and Dick would lose four shillings a week!

The church bell gave the last few slow strokes, and from the blast furnaces of Napoli lights shone up blood-red into the dark sky; outside in the street children squabbled in play, and in the public-houses glasses chinked and men talked all at once, with occasional puncturing "tings" from the cash-desk.

The child stirred faintly at her side again, whimpering; she had not the tenderness, the wit, to draw it to her breast and comfort it, and it went on crying feebly, like a little kitten. She turned restlessly in bed, and felt very hot; her eyes were blazing like coals in her head; her bruised back and shoulders felt leaden and cold. Once, as she moved, her arm lay across the baby. It felt such a little, little thing and even the weight of her arm stopped its cry, made it instinctively wrestle with her for air.

She lay still, then, very still, thinking. Downstairs the women drank, and talked in sibilant whispers while the old man blinked and chattered. Presently the soft peach-coloured lights in the parish church went out—preparation was over; the people were going home with their hands folded over their Prayer-books, some of them solemn about their first Communion, remembering Mr. Reay's injunction not to let worldly thoughts, even of the lighted shops and the jostling Saturday night crowd, break in upon the brooding calm that had fallen upon them with the dim lights, the vesper hymn and Benediction.

Her mother had found out that it was Dick! Amy stirred again, unable to lie still, unable to find comfort for mind or body. Dick would be in the courts—Dick, only eighteen, and all the chaps at work would laugh and sneer at him! He would never, never, never speak to her again. It couldn't be ex-

pected that a boy would have anything to do with a girl who had done him out of four shillings a week, and shamed him before everyone.

This bedroom would be hers for ever; never, never would she get away from this horrible home; no other boy had ever looked at her; she was not pretty, she was not smart and sharp-tongued as so many girls were.

After a long time she turned over and lay heavy and still. There were small, faint movements beneath her, like the movements the child had made before it was born; she used to sit and wonder, then, dully, whether it were a tiny hand or foot so anxious to escape the imprisoning womb; it was trying feebly now to escape.

Presently came little sounds that reminded her of the choked noise made by some kittens she had drowned in a pail of water last year. Her heart was thumping horribly, and she had to force herself to lie there as she did until the weak protest of lungs and limbs beneath her gave her the same flesh-creeping tingle of horror her mother's cruelty had taught her, and she lay fiercely heavy. At last she drifted off into sleep, a sleep of fevered dreams and half-sensory floatings outside her body from which she was wakened by her mother—it seemed many years afterwards.

"Move up," she said thickly. "Yo'r Dadda's bin sick. I told old Wall as her were givin' 'im too much pig puddin'. Such a bloomin' waste, when other folks might 'ave enjoyed it! I dunna fancy sleepin' wi' 'im."

Amy moved across the bed a little way. Her mother touched the baby and peered down at it closely.

"Why, it's gone dead!" she cried, and stared suspiciously at Amy, who turned to the wall.

"Did yo' know as it wuz dead?" asked the mother.

"'Ow shud I know, yo' old fool? Good job if it is dead."

For a few moments the mother rated her, for she saw the four shillings a week vanished now; then she became philosophical—after all, she had other daughters, and Amy was only just seventeen. But she had to rate for the sake of discipline, as she laid the baby on the mantelshelf and blew

out the candle. Amy lay looking at the glimmering square of the window, as her mother subsided heavily into the bed, making it sag down so on its weakened springs that the girl slid almost on top of her. A car, with brilliant lights, taking an unusual course down Ruthers' Row towards Napoli, sent a shaft of light through the window, to shine pallidly on the child's tiny, limp hand hanging over the edge of the mantelshelf. The dull glow from the furnaces replaced the white light, and Amy saw the small knob of a head lying beside her two dusty hair pads and a broken comb. She shivered and struggled.

"Lay still, can't yo'? If yo've been i' bed all day, I havena," snapped her mother.

"I can see its hand," Amy snuffled.

Her mother turned over and stared at the mantelpiece.

"Come to think of it, I dunna know as I fancy sleeping in here wi' it—'tisna as if it wuz a Christian, but—I dunno——"

She was sitting up now and turned to Amy almost complacently.

"One good thing—it went off afore that blasted Reay or the Church lady 'ad bin round, christening it! Us shanna need for give it Christian burial now—us can say as it were stillborn. Mrs. Whatshername will get it put away over at the undertaker's for half-a-crownd."

She made as if to lie down again, and Amy shivered once more.

"There, I forgot what I sat up for," said Mrs. Willis, and, flopping out of bed, took up the dead child in her hands and carried it downstairs, laying it on the side table among the dirty crockery and the papers in which fish and black pudding had been wrapped. Once more she subsided into bed and began to snore. Amy lay awake, tossing from side to side, gasping for air, light-headed and shivering, though her eyes were blazing.

"Oh dear," she sighed, again and again. Once her mother lunged at her with a protesting elbow.

"Oh, I do wisht yo'd lay still," she muttered, sleepily.

There was a faint noise in the living-room and she started up in bed.

"Mother, did yo' shut th' cat out?" she shrieked.

"Oh, curse yo', go an' find out!" snapped Mrs. Willis.

Amy started to clamber out of bed over the great bulk of her mother, who pushed her back and struggled out of bed once more. Her fat legs and splay feet paddled across the room; there was the sound of chasing and a chair fell over, but at last, with a curse, the door was opened and shut again.

"Bin on th' table after the bones an' bits o' skin," she explained, "but I thought I'd best bring it back; it's that hot down i' th' kitchen. It isna as if it wuz a Christian, no more'n a lump o' pork, as yo' might say. But if it gets a bit funny Mrs. Whatshername wunna take it to th' undertaker's for me, an' then it'll be twelve an' sixpence up me shirt for give it Christian burial."

She lay down, wakened now out of her first sleep. She talked to Amy confidentially of her own babies, for, now that Amy had had a baby, she was a woman, though only seventeen. But all the time she spoke, Amy could see the little lump on the mantelpiece; through her mother's monotone it was the one relevant fact.

"It's all for the best," droned the thick voice, "but yo'll just go along, me lady, and get a couple o' quid out of that there Dick—after all my trouble an' all! An' nex' time perhaps yo'll see as it's your place for confide i' yo'r mother, an' not let her go to the trouble o' nosing them out for 'erself."

At last she fell asleep, and all the night Amy twisted and turned until her mother was awakened to anxiety about her.

"Like a blazing lump o' coal," said Mrs. Willis, laying her hand on the girl's cheek.

"Oh dear, oh dear!" moaned Amy; "give me a drink, mother."

Her mother, muttering something about not wanting another dead on her hands, especially as she had let her insurance lapse, padded downstairs to rake life into the dying embers, and make tea. Amy grew worse; her cheeks were red, her eyes

glittered until she looked almost pretty. She babbled of Dick, of her work, of her father and mother and how she loathed them; she was shrieking to Dick to come and beat her as her mother did; she was grinding her teeth as she choked out the baby's life. At last, thoroughly frightened, Mrs. Willis drew her shawl over her head and went out through the cool windlessness of the Easter morning. She was afraid to get a doctor, for she was not quite sure whether doctors could tell if the child had been stillborn or not. But Mr. Reay—anyone could fool Mr. Reay! And she certainly did not want Amy to die.

In a few houses there were signs of life, girls standing at the doors taking out curl-papers and plaits, some to go to their First Communion, some to hurry to the station and meet their boys for a day's trip to Swandale. Down one street the district nurse hurried, her cape floating behind her in her haste. Two giant chimneys smoked thinly, unceasingly.

CHAPTER IV

HALF-PAST five was chiming from Shellpit Parish Church as Francis Reay went to his bath that Easter morning; the first Celebration was at seven, and he wanted an hour to strew flowers at the feet of his Risen Lord. He read the resurrection chapters in his Greek Testament. The sonorous words sounded even more beautiful so, he thought, than in their mysteriously beautiful English. Then, standing by the open window, looking over smokeless chimneys and silent factories to the rim of tree-girt hills that cratered the district, he was lost in contemplation of the Mystery of the Resurrection. His lips began to move—his body seemed a dead thing lying down there on the earth: he himself was floating above it, translated by the power of his adoration. Very softly he spoke:

"Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre. And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus. And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: and as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen."

He felt extraordinarily soothed, lightened, on this Easter Day. The two years of his curacy in Shellpit had been hard: he had plunged into the work with the spirit of a John the Baptist, and he had found many Herods; on every side horror and sordidness seemed to drag at him with claws of steel, undoing his work, hindering him, shouting him down. Sometimes a great flood of weakness would beat him down,

and, for a few moments, he would feel that he must forsake his self-appointed task and, lying down among green fields and flowers, admit that it was too great for him. Then would come a vision of his Lord, exceeding sorrowful, even unto death—and he would get up, nerved again for the fight.

But, lately, to the enveloping horrors of his work had been added a personal trouble. He was thinking too much about Helen Clevion. They had seen a good deal of each other the last few months; he felt, with compunction, that he was rather overworking her in Lower Shellpit, which reminded him of the pool of Bethesda, a place where the sick and afflicted in mind, body and estate congregated. And she went among them so cheerfully, taking horrors of body and soul alike so calmly, so much as a matter of course, that he had been reassured. They worked well together; sometimes, to his prayers and his mysticism she gave her sidelong, quizzical glance, her air of half-amused tolerant interest. But they had not quarrelled yet. Several times she told him that the mission of men like Lister was in no wise different from the mission of Christ; and this seemed blasphemy to him. She said frankly that, in mending people's bodies, she was giving him good soil wherein to plant any seeds of faith he desired; but at night when, exhausted, he sometimes fell at his praying-desk to find the balm his Lord had never failed to give him, and only wakened to full consciousness when his cramped limbs became painful, her face came between him and the Calvary—a face rather thin, very clear-cut, with humorous eyes and firm mouth that easily curved in a smile. To his mind this thinking of her was a sin. All his life, since, as a little boy, he had lived hushed for months because his father was dying slowly, he had been brought up to consecrate himself to the service of Christ; his mother had begged him to take instruction and become a Catholic priest; when he had threshed the matter out thoroughly for himself he guessed that this was because his mother wanted to prevent him from thinking of marriage, and he, in his heart, felt convinced that he did not need the superadded strength of obedience to Authority, to a Rule of Life. How easy it was for him to give

himself a living sacrifice to God! At least, it had been easy then, and now! This coming of Helen Clevion into his life was surely only his Lord's way of proving him—his Lord demanded his life, and had it. Now he was demanding more—and no demand his Lord could make was too great for him.

The Easter Epistle spoke to him with personal insistence even more pointedly than the gospel. As he read St. Paul's words he felt that he had a long way to go before he could attain that stern courage and austerity of the old saint. It was to be a long, fighting path with pitfalls he had not anticipated.

"For ye are dead," he read, "and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory. Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence and covetousness, which is idolatry——"

For a long time he stood, his eyes on the distant, soft greenery, as thoughts came to him, wrapped him round and saturated him; visions came, flashing instantaneous, glowing as background to other flashes; there was the Garden, and the three sleepers, and the lonely Christ, weak and spearless, while in the city below men brought spears against him. There was the Calvary and the horror of great darkness, and of agony—then came a message to the Corinthians exhorting them to bear the light affliction of the moment, which was working for them an exceeding great weight of glory. Followed a flashing glimpse of Bob Saunders as he had choked away his life, and a swift, unanswerable question about Bob's great weight of glory.

Then came a vision of Helen standing in a little dark kitchen with him beside a young boy who had been buried beneath burning slag, scorched and charred as he went about his work; Helen had spoken indignantly of the unfenced slag heap. A woman from next door was there, with an apron to her eyes, fingering a little piece of charred cloth that had been gummed by burnt flesh to the femur.

"His Sunday suit?" she had asked, in hushed tones, to the red-eyed mother.

"Yes, I were cleanin' and doin' up his working suit, an' he had for wear his best, 'e 'ad," and she sobbed, then, to think of it.

"Seems a'most like a judgment," said the other woman.

Francis Reay's eyes had met the doctor's—queer how those still grey eyes could look with sanity on these horrors that turned him sick! But, these light afflictions, enduring for a moment, or a lifetime—what did they matter? And to-day was Easter Day; the grave was empty where they had laid Him.

The visions went, leaving one, most dear—the image of his Risen Christ; suddenly he was down on his knees, in an ecstasy of love, looking into the face on the crucifix, which had become transfigured with the Easter glow; his long hands gripped the edges of the desk until the bones of his knuckles whitened.

"O Christ, I am dead to the flesh as Thou wert. My life is hid with Thee in God. But grave-clothes of the flesh still cling a little. Lord, if it make me Thy worthier servant, send me a Passion and a Crucifixion. I have not Thy strength, O Christ—I am man and Thou art God. Yet this and more would I suffer for Thee, who didst give Thy life for me—I shall be more than conqueror, since Thou hast conquered the flesh. Sin and death shall have no dominion over me if I can bring many to a knowledge of Thee."

Into his prayer came sounds; the church bell beginning to peal out the Easter chime, and footsteps shuffling as though dragging worn shoes. The splendour dissolved—faded—came back in a radiant mist as a furtive knock changed to a clamour at the door. He rose from his knees and waited an instant, groping through the dawn hush of Joseph of Arimathea's garden. Then he went downstairs. He recognized Mrs. Willis as he opened the door; she looked unwashed—one of those foul things of corruption from which Christ's flesh had risen. Usually he was able to greet her and her

like as his Lord would have greeted them. To-day, which smelt to him of lilies and frankincense, she shocked him.

"It's our Amy, Master Reay," stammered the woman, a little taken aback by his swiftly concealed look of shock.

"What's the matter?" he asked, coming back step by step to Shellpit and the life that had been going on all the time while he was dreaming. But it was hard to come back—he wanted his life hid with Christ in God—it was safer so.

"Her trouble come along Friday night, sir—born dead, it were. A nice lot o' trouble I've had wi' 'er, dirty, foul-mouthed madam! But now there's summat up wi' our Amy."

Mr. Reay's face struck Mrs. Willis as being, as she put it to Mrs. Wall afterwards, "a bit flummoxed: like as if he'd on'y just woke up." His lips were moving; the words of the gospel were on them; the mists of the Garden got in between him and Mrs. Willis, and the embalming spices the women were carrying vainly were all about him.

"Behold two men in shining garments," he whispered, though he could see only Mrs. Willis, fat and frowsy. "And as they were afraid they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?"

He stared at her, frowning; across the road, through the great stone that had been rolled away from the mouth of Death, he could see the aspidistra in the front window of Mrs. Taverner's house; there were pink tie-ups on the curtains at each side of it.

"Can yo' come, Master Reay, an' see 'er? I darsen't fatch doctor," Mrs. Willis was saying.

In the empty tomb, beside the linen garments folded in place, was no body of his Lord, as he followed the women along.

"He is not here!" he whispered, and jerked himself back again to Mrs. Willis.

"I' bed at home, Master Reay, burnin' hot like a furnace."

The vision fled. He came back to Lower Shellpit.

"Why didn't you fetch the doctor?" he asked sternly.

"I—I don't want no pleece case, sir. You see, sir, we didna 'ave no midwife when Amy's trouble come along, an'

now we want 'ush it up. I thought if I had half-a-crown I could give to a friend of mine what does the pinking for Master Bennett, the undertaker, she'd slip it away unbeknownst—we havena got no twelve and sixpences for throw away on Christian burial, Master Reay." She began to whine at that.

"I have to take service at seven and eight. I'll come down afterwards," he said, breaking in on her rigmarole. "And I'll send the doctor."

"Oh, please, sir!" cried the woman.

"You don't want your daughter to die, do you?" he asked, sternly. "What is there I can do for her? I don't know much about these things, but I should imagine she is seriously ill."

"Oh, all right, then," said the woman, sullenly, turning away. Then she came back again.

"Not a bit o' food i' th' house, Master Reay!" she whined. "Amy there, living on the fat o' the land, and dad eatin' 'is 'ead off, as you might say—never a penny on'y his compensation, which dunna even keep him proper, let alone a wife and fambly."

He looked at her, and his soul was filled with helplessness; he felt no horror at her now, only a yearning longing to take her out of the grave. He promised to come down again, and they both turned away, she down the hill to the Pits, he up the hill to the beautiful church; little crowds were straggling along swiftly in twos and threes with calm faces; the Confirmation candidates looked, some of them, frightened, some expectant; one of them had the look on the face of the Virgin in Rossetti's "Annunciation"; she was a little cripple girl being brought along by a big brother in her long chair.

Mrs. Willis faded from him; the hush of resurrection was coming back.

"He is not here, He is risen," he whispered, dearly, to himself, as one whispers the name of a beloved, with words of caress to veil it. "He is risen—our lives are hid in His; His flesh has put on incorruption."

As he reached Dr. Clevion's door, just opposite the side

gate of the church, his face was shining again; she was just coming out and looked at him a little anxiously. She had seen that sort of splendour before on a face, and was disturbed to see it on his. He smiled at her, and took off his hat; the pale sunlight shone on them both; little eddies of dust went round their feet.

"I wish we were away on the Alps to-day, doctor," he said, with a catch in his voice, "where the shepherds call to each other over the distant hills, while the sheep are feeding. 'Christ is Risen!' I want to say it to everyone to-day."

"Did you come to tell me that?" she asked, a little smile that one reserves for a dear child, on her lips.

"No, I'm sorry, I came to send you down to Amy Willis in Ruthers' Row. She is very ill—some sort of fever, I suppose; there's a dead baby about a day old, there."

"Yes, I'll go," said Helen, with a short laugh. "I was actually coming to sit at the back and listen to you."

"I was so glad to see you at church on Good Friday," he said, gently.

"I thought it was dreadful," she said frankly. "But we've no time to talk now." She pointed to the clock—two minutes to seven—and turned back to get her bag. As she went along a minute later, she met Miss Wembley with her Prayer-book, turning into the churchyard. Her soft brown eyes were calm, and filled with tears as she stopped, hesitant an instant.

"I can go to the Eucharist to-day, doctor," she said, "thanks to you."

"Thanks to your own common sense!" said Helen, and added, as Miss Wembley shook her head confidently, "what a dear thing you are!"

CHAPTER V

THERE was swift work for the doctor at Ruthers' Row. Amy lay there pink-cheeked and lustrous-eyed, fidgeting and tossing in the comfortless bed. She screamed when the doctor said she ought to be in the infirmary; alternately she cried out that she wished she was dead, and that she was frightened of dying. Presently she was quietened, for Dr. Clevion sent for Dr. Farne from the Neurological Hospital. A small operation was necessary, and an anæsthetist must be found; the doctor who usually accompanied Helen could not come owing to the infectiousness of Amy's complaint, and the danger to several of his patients.

It was Louis Farne's first visit to the Shellpit slums; his work, since the early days of the war, had been principally among shell-shocked soldiers, mental and nerve cases under hospital treatment. The place was more horrible than any he had seen in London and in Edinburgh; there was a harshness, a hopelessness, about Ruthers' Row strange after the fierce poverty of Edinburgh, the stuffy sordidness of the London Borough; and a frank shamelessness about Mrs. Willis that was surprising. He was used to women who made frantic and transparent attempts at tidying when a doctor was about; most women did it; they tried to hide the more gross evidences of filth and poverty. Not so Mrs. Willis. The table was just as it had been the last night, the relics of mean food flanked by stout bottles; the fire had been raked out and the ashes had joined those already on the hearth; in his ladder-backed chair the father sat with dropped jaw and grey face, trying to smile with his dropped lips, trying in vain to hold a pipe of tobacco with his dropped hand. Up in the girl's bedroom there was none of the hurried superimpositions of neatness that doctors often find; she lay on the creak-

ing bed, too sick and frightened to care about its horror. When the doctor asked for hot water and a basin, a little was brought to her in a pudding bowl—the only basin in the house. She had to send out to buy a kettle and a hand basin before she could do anything.

“Lord, what a hole!” said Louis Farne, and sent his car flying back to the hospital for clean sheets and pillows. “She ought to be in hospital.”

“No room—I rang them up twice last night for another case. That Chayle Heath Pit disaster last week has filled them to overflowing. They’ve got half a dozen accident cases out in the corridors, they told me.”

Louis nodded.

“They’ve sent me five cases this morning. Can you come up at eleven?”

She nodded.

“Some of them don’t like it—one old collier said why should he come to the blooming ’Sylum for a broken leg, and I couldn’t make him see that he was only sent there because the hospital is full. They’re still bringing them up—bodies now, not cases.”

Helen motioned to him; he helped her to push the bed to the window; she had to take a piece of antiseptic gauze from her bag and clean the cobwebbed pane a little to let in the light.

They stood by the window, waiting, until the messenger came back. Amy’s gleaming eyes were on them; downstairs, Mrs. Willis and Mrs. Wall talked in whispers, very proud to have two doctors in the house at once.

“D’you think they’ll know as the kid wasna born dead?” asked Mrs. Willis, fearfully.

“It’s on’y your word or theirs,” said Mrs. Wall. “Contradic’em blind.”

“This place is in the shadow of death,” Helen Clevion was saying. “Sometimes I wonder if we do any good at all. We patch them up, and clean them up and start them going again, but what chance have they in places like this? And whatever do they get out of their lives, anyway?”

Louis's answer was a slight shrug.

"Do they want to live because they're afraid of what comes after death, or from the mere animal instinct to hang on to life?" she said, in a low voice.

"Instinct, I think," said Farne, looking out, as Francis Reay had done, to the fringe of distant greenery. "My wife died five years ago to-day—Easter Sunday. She hated to die; she said it was damnable."

"I'm sorry," she said, gently. "I knew—something happened to you just then."

There was a long silence. He looked at his watch and grumbled at the slowness of the messenger. The bell for the second Celebration began to ring.

"Busy day for the clergymen," said Louis, suddenly. "Services, baptisms, and all the rest of it, and heaps of weddings to-morrow."

"When Francis Reay came to fetch me here an hour ago, he looked very happy about it," she said, her eyes softening. "He said 'Christ is Risen!' and meant it, too—I mean, it really *matters* to him."

"I suppose it's his job," said Louis.

"No, it isn't that. It's his job just *because* Christ matters so much to him. I'm quite sure he'd cheerfully be burnt at the stake for his religion." She told him of the Good Friday service.

"It seems to me a horrible pity to make a beautiful thing like Christ into such a piece of wizardcraft and obscenity as they manage to in churches," she said, suddenly.

"Good Lord!" he said, surprised at the passion in her voice.

"Well, don't you think they have? Wasn't He fine enough without making Him impossible? A man like that—they need not have tacked on to Him virgin birth and immaculate conception; and they certainly need not have made Him rise from the dead. It seems so ungenerous, to me—putting extra bits on to Him! Just like taking a masterpiece an artist has painted for you, and putting finishing touches to it yourself! Like—like looking a gift-horse in the mouth!"

"I don't quite follow, Helen," began Louis.

"No, you didn't hear Francis Reay on Good Friday!" she said bluntly. "It's that that's made me so hot about it just now. What I mean is, there was Jesus of Nazareth with a religion good enough to make the whole earth a jolly fine place. But that wasn't enough! They must go and bring disgusting, archaic blood-sacrifices into it, and endow Him with all the attributes of wizardcraft. This Easter Sunday business—doesn't it sicken you? Why did they need to make Him rise from the dead, and be different from humanity? Why, dying seems absolutely inevitable to His character—a rebel such as He was; they'd never tolerate Him—they don't tolerate Him now, even to this day!"

"I never guessed you were so keen on religion, Helen," said Louis, looking at her thoughtfully.

"I don't think I was, but Francis Reay challenges one, you know. Do you know him well?"

"Not well, no. He comes to visit a few of my patients. I've spoken to him once or twice. There's an old lady who stands up and turns to the east when she sees his black suit and clerical collar, and begins to say the Creed. They look very earnest about it, both of them."

"Louis," she said, dropping her voice, "I'm worried about him, a little."

"Why?"

"It's not easy to say. You see, I'm so abominably matter-of-fact. I may be thinking he's queerer than he really is! But he seems to me to be the sort of man you'd find in a Carthusian monastery instead of in an ordinary provincial town. Some of the things I've noticed"—she spoke still more softly, glancing at Amy, who was lying with closed eyes—"I don't think are pure and simple mysticism—fits of exaltation—that sort of thing. I don't know much about him, but——"

"You mean he's got one of those mediæval martyr sort of kinks?" said Louis.

She nodded.

"Um—calls eating and sleeping sinful lusts of the flesh, I believe," she said, with what was meant to be a smile of amusement, but was really one of tragic appeal. "I've a

horrible fear that some day something may happen—I hardly know what! Christ to him is a living, breathing thing—nearer than breathing, in fact.” She broke off, hesitant.

“Pity he isn’t married,” said Louis, shortly.

Helen caught her breath. There was another long silence. Louis was staring at her, wondering exactly where she came in in this business. As sudden enlightenment came to him, he said quickly:

“He’ll be visiting at the hospital on Tuesday. I’ll get him to stay to dinner. I’d like to know him better.”

“That’s good,” she said, and the messenger and nurse came in with the necessary apparatus. For half an hour there was no time for speech, save quick commands and requests. Before they had finished, Reay came into the kitchen downstairs, where the two babies whimpered, and the old man chattered to himself, while the two women envied Amy all this attention.

As Louis went out, he pointed to the child’s body on the mantelpiece.

“Have to be an inquest,” he said shortly. “Shall I ring them up?”

She nodded, and he went down to his car, round which the whole of the neighbourhood that was not in bed had congregated. After a while Reay came upstairs to speak to Helen. She was standing by the open window with the silver April sunlight on her brown hair and her white over-all; he looked at her and then at the bed extraordinarily white and clean, where Amy lay, not quite conscious.

“She is better?” he asked.

“It wasn’t much. She’ll be all right now if they are not allowed to worry her.”

His eyes fell on the dead child and his face went white. Instinctively Helen moved towards him.

“No breakfast, I suppose?” she said, reproachfully. “You deserve to faint on your altar steps.”

He did not hear her. He was pointing dumbly to the small body covered with a dirty piece of rag; the tiny hand drooped listlessly over the edge of the wide shelf, the small, round, fluff-covered head resting on the dusty hair pads.

"You shouldn't look, and it shouldn't be here," said Helen; "they are going to fetch it away soon. Oh, these hellish houses! How can men and women be even commonly decent in such a hole as this?"

"It hasn't been baptized," he managed to say at last.

Her eyes met his, straight and challenging.

"Oh—damn! Do you know that it lived twenty-four hours, and hadn't been washed? And—this girl—she's simply black with bruises."

They both looked at Amy, who was rapidly babbling, in half-consciousness. Helen put away her instruments; he thought of that dear certainty of resurrection that had come to him that morning. Death was here, infinitely dreadful and wistful—but Christ had risen from Death!

He laid one hand on the dirty rag; the body was cold and soft. His eyes closed; he saw the banks of the Jordan where the Dove had descended; the fig trees and the dried grass melted away to burnt sand, and women and children were surrounding Christ, who was holding the little ones in His arms, laying His hands upon them.

"O Lord," he whispered, "here is one of Thy little ones, shut outside Thy doors so innocently. As Thou didst take the children within the arms of Thy most holy love in that far country of Thy life and passion, take, we pray Thee, this little child born in sin, dead in sin, into Thine everlasting mercy. Amen."

Helen was bending over the bed; Mrs. Willis came in, fussing one moment, whining the next. Reay and Helen went downstairs together; she grew indignant at sight of the babies on their mattress; the weakly one was obviously a day or two from death; the neglected old man smiled at her and slobbered. Outside the house she forgot her anxiety concerning Reay, and talked hotly.

"Look at it!" she cried, her hand sweeping in the whole of Ruthers' Row and the shawdruck. "Oh, what's the good of anything we can do? The M.O.H. told me these houses are built on an ancient filled-in cesspool. What's the good of all our fine civilization? It's like having the finest surgeon

in England, with every aseptic precaution, stitching up a wound with most exquisite care, when next minute a giant stalks into the operating theatre and squashes patient and surgeons and all with one regardless blow of his thumb."

"I often feel the futility of things," he said, "but not to-day! To-day has wakened faith in me."

"I've no faith in faith," she cried, hotly; "faith has had its day and done nothing. What's wanted is the will to make a new earth. We have the knowledge right enough! As it is, everything we do is smashed, undone. We patch and mend and remould broken people, and the next minute whole people mutilate themselves or let others mutilate them."

She strode on, swiftly, up the steep hill; he came beside her. His face was white: the eyes that had been glowing were saddened.

"Doctor," he said, "I've told you before—if you watch here you will see faith triumphant! You will see the power of Christ making your new earth, just as you want it."

She turned on him fiercely.

"Perhaps! But you Church people don't give Christ a chance! Why do you make Him a Son of God at all, unless you grant that we are all sons of God? What appeal do you think this Christ of yours can make to a woman like Mrs. Willis? Most of the people in Lower Shellpit are like that madman in the tombs, saying, 'What have we to do with Thee, O Thou Son of God?'"

"I don't think anything would appeal to Mrs. Willis but a definite belief in a red-hot hell—and that you rationalists have knocked out of them," he said, getting as heated as she.

"Good! A little more Black Magic gone overboard! Why don't you preach, not Christ crucified as Paul did, but Christ who went about just being kind, and doing His day's work, and forgiving those who hurt Him? I think, if you could show them Christ not transfigured at all, but just simply kind and gentle and understanding, a man like themselves, with weaknesses and mistakes that He conquered in the end, He really would be a cleansing thing in their lives. If you could forget all you ever knew about Him, and begin to know Him

afresh! If someone could come now and preach the Sermon on the Mount for the first time!"

They walked past a dozen small houses; he caught his breath sharply several times, and seemed to be trying to speak. At last he managed it.

"You frighten me," he said. "To me these things you say are blasphemy."

"I certainly don't mean them for blasphemy," she said, earnestly. "I've thought a lot about you since I first knew you, and I've been up against a good many problems in my work, especially in Lower Shellpit. Where I've seen science fail—because it's not had a fair chance—I've wondered if religion *might* make a new earth until we get enough people with knowledge willing to use it in this sort of building. But when I saw that God you set up on Good Friday, I felt hopeless. They weep sentimentally for Christ's physical sufferings! Why, Mr. Reay, there are a thousand crucifixions going on in Shellpit this minute, and there isn't an Easter Sunday for *them*! To-day you told me so happily that Christ rose from the dead. To me, and to most people nowadays, physical death doesn't hurt one scrap! We've had so much to put up with from our flesh before we get rid of it, that it would be adding insult to injury to tell us we have to get possession of it again. Haven't you had enough of your body? Really?"

He stared at her in amazement, and flushed hotly, looking suddenly away, afraid to meet her eyes.

"If you haven't, why is it that you and so many religious people like to live the lives of ascetics, repressing the flesh like—like Chinese people bandage women's feet so that they can only hobble a few feeble steps? Can't you see how illogical it all is? You create the bogey of the flesh and fight it by celibacy, and fasts and Heaven only knows what tricks! Are you afraid that if you give it an inch it's going to take a yard? And then you're thankful that Christ rose from the dead, and put on His flesh again."

"His flesh was sinless," said Francis Reay, trembling, and Helen knew that argument was useless. They reached her

gate and stood there. Her maid, who had been watching for her, opened the door and stood smiling to welcome her in.

"I'll go down to Ruthers' Row again later on. And I'll get the N.S.P.C.C. on to those two babies there: one of them is dying, I'm afraid. Are you going down again?"

"If I possibly can. There's matins and another Celebration at noon, but the Rector will help with that. In the afternoon there's a children's service, and in the evening I'm going to have an open-air service before we go into the Mission; then there is some sick visiting. But I'll try."

"I wouldn't, if I were you! But come along after all that orgy and have some sort of meal with me to-night, will you?" she said, smiling at him. "I won't mention one controversial subject!"

He nodded, muttered his thanks and turned away.

That was the first time Francis Reay came to Helen's house as a guest. It was half-past nine when he arrived; she had almost given him up. He came in, and suddenly recollecting that he still was wearing his hat, dropped it on the floor, and relapsed into a big chair by the fire, holding up his long, thin hands to the blaze. He spoke of the service at the Mission, and asked about Amy. Lizzie came in to announce supper, and he gathered himself together to stand up. Then, without more ado, he sat back again in the chair and fainted. Helen put in a little glass things that brought him back to life again, while Lizzie bustled about with meat juice, because Helen diagnosed starvation—and, indeed, he admitted afterwards that he had had no time to eat all day and was faint with exhaustion. She talked to him bluntly, and took him back home, with a great bottle of medicine, which she insured his taking by asking his landlady to serve it on the table at every meal.

This visit was only the first of many; every Sunday, now, when the day's work was over, her surgery in Sharlock Street would be his first place of call, but, if she had gone, he would stumble up to St. Mary's Road, almost dropping sometimes in sheer exhaustion. And occasionally he would sit for half an hour in silence, drawing comfort from her

big lazy chair, her flowers, and the cool sanity of her as she sat reading until he felt fit to talk. These visits were balm of Gilead in the hot desert of his work.

"Sometimes I think Christ must have gone to Bethany as I come to you," he said, entering the drawing-room on the Sunday after the Ascension, and finding it unexpectedly festal for Helen's birthday. Lizzie had filled it in great secrecy with white narcissi before Helen was up; later came Louis's car with four great pots of azaleas, snowy and pink, which those patients who ran the conservatories at the hospital had sent her.

She smiled at him quizzically.

"Oh, I don't mean anything about sitting at one's feet," he added, with a sudden surprising flush; "quite the other way on! It's I who listen—you make me! But this place is such a refuge; I've never had anything approaching a home——"

Louis came in then, to celebrate the birthday, bringing with him a neurologist from London who was staying at the Staff House to study Louis's gymnasium. Later the editor of the local paper also came in: Helen had begun by quarrelling with him fiercely about the hospitality of his columns to ventilate the Ruthers' Row grievance, and ended by being great friends. Much shop was talked; Francis said very little, but watched Helen and listened. The editor said that the sentence of six months on Mrs. Willis for criminal neglect was ridiculously light: that started an argument on prisons as educational forces, or as unproductive, vindictive places of punishment. Francis, later on, volunteered the information that the two babies had been taken in by Dr. Barnardo's Homes, and that started an argument on Child Care Institutions, the editor enunciating the proposition that every child should be taken from every mother and reared by the State; Helen fought every point of his argument, and it was almost three o'clock before the meeting broke up.

All that night Francis did not sleep; he had never seen Helen with other men before; he had never seen her an ordinary woman before; hitherto she had been the doctor,

or the almost man-like friend, with all a man-friend's privilege of unbridled argument and unglossed home truths. Even so she had got into his imagination, had come between him and his prayers and visions; she had come to be much more a prop to him than he had believed possible; he had fought his growing pleasure in her comradeship until his Gospels had reminded him that he was more austere than his friendly Lord, who went about with twelve comrades and a little following of loving women. After that, realizing that the servant should not try to be greater than his Master, he had pursued his friendship unafraid; once, reading the *Little Flowers*, that was a second Bible to him, he had recollected how St. Francis, going to his forty days' fast, had taken half a loaf with him to eat, lest he should become vainglorious in having done even as Christ had done. And so Francis Reay took his half-loaf of friendship with Helen in imitation of the old-time comradeship of Bethany, and it was not until he saw her in a mildly gala frock of something that looked blue and shimmering and soft, and brown hair unusually bright with the backing of gold-eyed narcissi and rosy azaleas, that he realized where this half-loaf feast was taking him.

The thought filled him with horror, as on Easter Day: it was the old, old saintly fight between the flesh and the spirit. Love and its softnesses he had long since banished from his thoughts: his idea of the imitation of Christ made him see the love of woman as a thing of horror. All the rest of that night he knelt before the agonized Christ in the church, with only the faint altar lamp burning, leaving in darkness the gentle marble of the Mother and Child, and the friendliness of the young man at the marriage feast.

He fought, at one moment hugging this "light affliction" that should be a sacrifice to lay at the feet of his Lord; the next moment praying that he might have strength to overcome.

"Ye are dead—your life is hid with Christ in God," he said to himself again and again, but the next moment Helen's face was between the flower vases on the altar, smiling at him teasingly, yet with a glimmer of anxiety, and telling him he

was making a bogey for himself to fight. At one moment all the cold sanity of the twentieth century was on Helen's side, laughing at him for his asceticism, telling him that a new earth could be made only by commonplace people living sanely and completely in a commonplace world. And then the priest came back and took possession of him, telling him he was consecrated to God's service, a man elect, separated by the divine call, a man to whom the life of every-day was a sin, a man sworn to the example of the Man of Sorrows.

Francis Reay had lived to his thirty-second year without the mildest yielding to a love adventure. Kneeling there in the church, he wondered when this consciousness of his call to the ascetic's life had come to him; but he could not trace its beginnings: they must have been right back in his infancy. He remembered his father's slow death—his father was, for him, a shape on a bed, motionless save for two tormented eyes that looked at the tiny boy standing by his bed; his mother came as the memory of something austere that urged him to repress every gentleness, every weakness. Until she lay dead, only a few years ago, he had not been allowed to kiss her half a dozen times; every impulse of boyhood and youth had been sternly repressed. There came a memory of a school camp when he was seventeen; a dozen boys and a master with them; and his mother had come and taken rooms near, to see that no temptation came his way. She did not seek him out among his friends; she only spoke brusquely about dry socks, ground sheets, and the like when they met in the village; but he was conscious of her all the time, a black shadow on his holiday. And then going to the farm one day to fetch the ration of milk and eggs for the camp, he had met a dairymaid, who had smiled at him with sensuous invitation in her red lips. And he had kissed her in the morning sunlight: then, dropping milk and eggs at the feet of the astonished girl, he had rushed to tell his mother about it, and that day he had left the camp. She had instilled in him a terrified, panicful horror of women; except in his work he had scarcely spoken to one until in Helen Clevion he found a species of which he need have no fear. The terrible affair

with the milkmaid had been most obvious physical attraction: he saw that now. This love for Helen that had grown up so silently, so secretly, completely without his volition, utterly against his judgment, was physical; but it was much more; in the main, it was spiritual and intellectual.

For hours he knelt, until the sanctuary lamp began to glow more palely in the paling night while he hugged the thought that he was laying something very precious on the altar, not in the bargaining spirit of Abraham of old, but in a spirit of compunction that he could, for one instant, desire a thing of which his Lord had never known. After a while, the martyr exultation in pain brought back the old ecstasy: he felt uplifted to God, and forgot to think what Helen might have to say about it all.

At last dry-eyed, faint with the intensity of his emotion, he fell asleep, his knees pressing the cold stone of the altar steps from which he had thrust the praying-mats, his head resting on his arms outflung over the communion rail.

He did not feel sleep as it came; in his state of nervous exhaustion and exaltation the transition to sleep from dream-wakefulness was imperceptible. He had been looking upwards from the crucifix to the black roof and back before he slept, and the agonized, lean face of the Christ was fixed on his brain. Presently, unvolitionally, thoughts slid into his mind, and the background of thoughts came trooping in and crowding round. The dim light of the sanctuary lamp became less concentrated, diffusing itself tremulously at first until it shone as a mellow gold pallor about him. The walls of the chancel dissolved softly; wide-branched, feathery trees that some memory told him were cedars covered a sloping hillside, casting inky shadows laced with pale golden filigree. Down at the foot of the hill a little grey and white town, with low, square houses, nestled asleep, its feet resting on the desert sand silvered in the moonlight. He watched, fascinated—words formed themselves in his brain; his sleeping lips muttered them.

“What went ye out for to see? A reed shaken by the wind?” he murmured. “The wind bloweth where it listeth.”

A soft wind stirred the branching shadows, and from the grey-walled town came a lighter shadow than they, stepping softly, swiftly towards the trees, the deep blue of her robe shimmering under the moon which made blue-black her long hair, golden her brown, sandalled feet and bare arms. It was a girl of fifteen, perhaps, or sixteen: her eyes were shining with shy expectancy as she ran swiftly the last few yards to the cedar grove, and stood, light-poised on one foot, listening to the crackling of twigs beneath the feet of someone coming down the hillside from the little distant village in the further valley.

Francis Reay's heart was beating fast, chokingly; what this scene had to do with him he could not imagine, but waited until it unfolded itself. He knew that he was dreaming, and stopped to wonder why it was that he did not play the usual star part of the dreamer of dreams. Then the quick, descending, crackling footsteps came nearer and a youth broke through the undergrowth into a clearing between the trees. His deep-sunk eyes were alight; about the poise of his body, the swing of his limbs as he walked, was a suggestion of taut strength, the strength that comes of hard physical toil. As he saw the girl standing shy and timid, drooping a little beneath the great tree, he took great strides towards her, his arms outstretched. Francis Reay listened—and heard:

"You came, then? You heard the words I whispered this morning as we passed?"

"Yes," whispered the girl, her eyes downcast, her breath coming and going quickly. "You said, 'To-night' and 'the cedar grove,' and so I came."

The youth took her hands in his, holding them so that she was compelled to draw close to him.

"Many times have I seen you as I passed through the town about my father's business."

"Many times have I seen you, too, carrying loads of wood," she whispered.

"What is your name?"

"Mary," came the girl's voice, tremulous.

"Mary!" he echoed, "the child of bitterness."

And then Francis saw the brown young arms wrapped round the blue robe as the youth drew the girl's eyes, compelled her lips to meet his. And when they drew apart, both trembling, the girl's eyes were wet with tears, her lips quivering. They wandered, with arms interlaced, through the pale amber shadows.

"The next time we meet—shall you kiss me again? Or will you go about your father's business?" the girl said, as the moon sank behind the hill over which the youth had to go to his home. Francis saw the youth's form stiffen, his eyes cloud as he thrust her from him, looking at her with sudden, half-comprehended fear.

"Mary!" he cried, and was striding away up the hillside as though an enemy were at his heels, but the girl, with a little cry of appeal, was after him. And then the walls of the church came back and settled all about Francis Reay: the diffulgent moonlight centred in the winking lamp and he wakened, cold and stiffened.

"Dreaming!" he said as he stood up and, bowing to the altar, turned towards the vestry. "A queerly vivid dream!"

He stumbled a little as he went down the aisle; it was bitterly cold in the church with the chill of dawn on the stones, in the air, in his bones. As he closed the door it clanged after him with a dull, hollow sound; the steps up to the porch were wet with the night dews. The flagstones leading through the old graves to the street were slippery with moisture, and amidst the gravestones, blackened with smoke or green with moss, mist wreaths slunk. The warm radiance, the gentle sadness of the dream clung about him, fitted with his own thoughts of the night, though, in the cold light of morning, the splendour had faded. Only the shadow of cold remained.

He passed Helen Clevion's house: in the front room upstairs, which a chance remark had told him was hers, a light was burning—a rather bright light, fighting with the dawn. He wondered if she had been reading all night; perhaps, reading late, she had fallen asleep forgetting the light. It did not occur to him that she, too, had problems that banished sleep.

As he walked along the church wall three cyclists came along—boys with school badges on their caps out for a day's exploring. They were arguing loudly about egg sandwiches and ham; they passed along like a cold douche of reality. Out in the main road were the shuffle and tramp of heavy-shod feet and the murmur of voices as men went to work with humped shoulders and hanging arms, some of them tired before the day began, weary with the chill of dawn when life runs slow. Into Reay's dream their low-voiced, muttered conversation drifted.

"Shellpit 'ud 'a' bin in th' League if they hadna have sold Jack Barnet to th' Rangers."

The answer was lost in the shuffle of feet, and in the mists of unreality that still clung about the dreamer.

"I'd back White Vi'let, my whippet, agen any as ever wuz pupped," came another voice, and an older one, swallowing it, went on:

"His eldest—young Minnie, what used to walk out wi' our Bill, got into trouble wi' one o' the foremen on Wilkins's—laid on her, 'e did, an' all, wi' a horse-whip till her wuz black an' blue, an' then pasted the fellow so's he couldna go near the works for a fortnit."

"Lettin' in all these blasted foreigners again! What's England for, that's what I want to know, and what did we fight for, if we're going to be overrun wi' Yanks, an' Frenchies, and Germans a'ready?"

Different voices, different interests—small interests, big to the speakers. They brought more cold douches of sanity into Reay's brain. A girl, Alice Derry, a notorious common girl of the town, went slinking down towards Lower Shellpit, shivering in the chill air. Her dyed hair was painful, her reddened lips looked sore in the grey light as the plodding men called chaffing, coarse remarks to her, to be answered with interest. One of her cheap silk stockings was slit from knee to ankle as she walked. Francis watched her, and sighed and went homewards.

Up the oil-clothed stairs he crept silently, stumbling a little in his tiredness; in his room he flung himself, still dressed,

on the bed. Helen Clevion's lighted window had torn him from last night's ecstasy of sacrifice: the suggestion of the slit stocking, and the colliers' blunt, chaffing remarks had made him sick to death, plunged him into a maelstrom of warring desires and disgusts.

CHAPTER VI

HELEN CLEVION had lain awake all night; or, rather, not lain awake so much as raged about the bedroom, taking herself fiercely in hand. At opposite poles she and Francis Reay were out on the same war-path. It was the war of the flesh against the spirit, but it was not the straight, uncomplicated, imprisoned fight of the monastery and the convent. Such a fight, being impersonal, and usually entailing only the subjection of self and of general, uncrystallized desire, is a fight that either drags on through life or is sublimated in service, or in a disguised passion for Christ or Our Lady. But Reay was suddenly, without much preparation, waging the monk's fight out in the world—with modern complications; Helen Clevion was, at the moment, only fighting herself. But her eyes, which were needed to watch the enemy every minute, were blinded by Reay, and by her quite unreasoning love for him; her hands, which she needed for the employment of her weapons, were held by her burden of pity and protectiveness for him. She was horribly indignant with herself, and just a little less indignant with him; this was her first love affair; it seemed an unwarranted and unsolicited interference with her liberty, an unwarrantable intrusion on the privacy of her personality by some other personality. How it had happened she had no idea. One day the house of her life had been cool and orderly and empty; the next he had stepped in, and it was cool and orderly and empty no longer. It was full of him when it was not full of protests against him.

At last, just as she heard the tramp-tramp of men passing the house, she got out of bed, looking rather wan in the bright incandescent light.

"A cold bath is clearly indicated," she told herself grimly, as she turned on the bath-taps in the grey dawn. From the

bathroom she could see the church; and she resented the church and all it stood for because, at the moment, it stood for Francis Reay. As the water churned into the bath, she saw the church door open and Francis come out, clanging it after him. He stumbled a little as though walking in his sleep; for a moment his left leg seemed to drag; then he pulled himself together and hurried along, his head bent. She tried to look at him dispassionately, but something in the dejection of his figure, the weariness of it, the utter loneliness of it among the smoky, grimy gravestones, hurt her, brought tears to her eyes and a lump to her throat. The next moment she was gasping as she plunged into the icy water of the bath.

"Helen Clevion!" the cold water made her tell herself, "you're getting abominably sentimental, and that's ruin to you. You'll be weeping, soon, when some unhappy hypochondriac describes his tummy-ache to you. You'd better go and get psycho-analyzed."

She dressed quickly, fastening her still damp hair back severely, and went down to the study-consulting-room, where she lit the gas fire and sat down with a new edition of Craig's *Psychological Medicine* which had come from her bookseller the day before. It was just after six: she very much hoped the various noises she had been making would waken Lizzie; she wanted the sane business of dustpan and brush going on about her, and commonplace talk about tea and bacon and eggs, and the sound of a fellow-creature who cared about her in the common ways of life. But she would not deliberately waken the girl till her alarm clock went at seven o'clock. And after a while Craig soothed her. There is something intensely reassuring—to a healthy person—in a medical text-book; the large tolerance of it, the sane unemotionalism, the cool matter-of-factness, the unstated and almost unconscious socialism of it, are a fine cold douche to egotism—and this conflict of the night had been rankest egotism. Turning the pages, to see the new matter that war-time research into psychopathology had added, she came across a sentence that stopped her, and compelled her to read it several times. She was thinking particularly, as she read, of an old man in the district who, after a long and hon-

oured life, had suddenly gone all to pieces and been dragged to gaol *via* the police courts.

"To punish an old man for an offence committed through loss of control," she read, "is to punish him for his mortality."

She sat for ten minutes, perhaps, thinking. She had given evidence in the court, as his doctor: Louis had added his testimony to hers. There was the old man, suddenly wrecked, standing in the court, shakily, pitifully; there was the conventionally unimaginative and not too intelligent bench of magistrates, obviously unsympathetic; there were the bridling mother, the shocked and blushing, but manifestly gratified, girl who were prosecuting. The only human being was the policeman who stood in the dock with the poor old man.

"Cheer up, Grandpa," she had heard him whisper as the shaking old hand held his elbow, "it's on'y for life."

Of course it was vain for her to explain to the men on the Bench that only a hairspring separated *them* from such loss of control—they could only judge; they could not understand. The court scene vanished; her head went sideways, her eyes were screwed up thoughtfully.

"Punishing him for his mortality!" she said, thoughtfully. "Um—and he's in gaol now because people haven't realized that most of these things they call sins are only illnesses! Mortality tearing at our structures, making holes in us." Then she added, very slowly: "That's where we're all so hopeless! We can't see all round things, somehow; I can see how unjust those people in court were to poor old Carnelly, but I couldn't, till just this minute, see how unjust I have been all night to myself. All this fuss about Francis Reay. Why *should* I resent so bitterly the fact that I'm falling in love with him? Punishing myself—brainlessly—for being a human being. Why shouldn't I have him? There, if Lizzie doesn't get up and make me some tea, I must."

She went into the kitchen, put the kettle to boil on the gas-stove. The teapot and milk and a cup and saucer were on a tray on the table; beside them a lemon on a little glass dish. She ran upstairs quickly and tapped at the girl's door. After a moment, as there was no answer, she tapped again.

Still there was no answer, and she opened the door, fearing sudden illness. But the bed was empty, folded back neatly like a spare bed when the guest has gone; there was a chilling look of unoccupiedness about the room. On the mantelpiece was a letter addressed "Dr. Clevion." She took it up and opened it, reading hurriedly.

"DEAR MADAM,

"I am sorry to treat you like this; you have been so good to me, and I've been so happy with you. But all the time I've been here I've been having a struggle. I never told you, when I came after the place, that I'd got into trouble five years ago, and you never looked up my references, because you said you preferred to judge people yourself. The little boy I had is out at nurse with a woman at Crowndale and I used to go and see him Sundays. I had to pay her ten shillings a week, and that only left me five to dress him and me and everything."

"But why didn't the silly child tell me?" cried Helen, reading on further.

"A few months ago I got to know a young fellow name of Wilson in the Pierrot Troupe at the King's Hall, and I fell in love with him. A fortnight ago he went to Manchester and wanted me to go with him, but there was a lot of things in the way. If Wilson had never come along I should never have wanted anything better than being with you. And I wondered what would happen to the boy, but I've wrote to ask Dr. Barnardo to fetch him like those Willises children was fetched. It's same as if I can't think about anything but Wilson lately; when I lay the table for your lunch I think what if it was for him, and when I make your bed it seems wrong it isn't his I'm making. He's very particular; he knows nothing about the boy. And he's particular about clothes, too. You can guess, now you know where my money went, that I didn't have much for underclothes and things. But last week when you give me all those pretty things from London it seemed like Providence.

I couldn't have gone off with him in the things I had, common calico and lace bought from the penny bazaar. I think many a girl's stopped from going off with a fellow because her underclothes is not just so. But don't you go thinking it was your fault for giving them to me, because I should have gone all the same, only it was better to go looking a bit smart. I'll never stop thinking of you, and what you do for folks. The money for the ton of coal that came on Friday I put in the soup tureen on the dresser. I didn't pay him because I thought I'd take it. But when it come to the point I couldn't. Please try to think kindly of me. I've had a hard time ever since that trouble came to me, and now there seems a chance of a bit of happiness, it's same as if it's flying in the face of Providence not to take it. You will find some soup ready, only wants warming up, in the larder. Also, I made two pies and a lot of cakes, so you will have something to go on with till you find a maid.

"Yours faithfully,

"LIZZIE."

For a moment Helen was angry: she thought that Lizzie might have told her, rather than running away like this. And the naïve explanation about the clothes sickened her. They had come, a great dress-basket of them, from a young cousin who was going to India to be married; Helen had told her, sometimes, about her patients in the slums; Cecile had packed up and sent all her very little-worn lingerie, her charming frocks to be distributed among some of her poorer patients or the people at the Mission. And the idea of girls like Amy Willis or the Saunders children in Cecile's clothes had been ridiculous. Many a time Helen had noticed Lizzie's camouflaged shabbiness; she had guessed nothing, visualizing some poor old mother or aunt in the background to be supported; staid, rather unemotional Lizzie as an illegitimate mother seemed impossible. Then, ousting the annoyance, came other thoughts—Lizzie working for her child all these years unhelped; Lizzie afraid to snatch her slender hope of marriage and happiness because her man was "a bit particular" and she had

no nice clothes; Lizzie buying flowers for her with her scarce pennies—and this last little attention of the food put ready for her in the larder!

She looked round the bedroom, a pretty little room with white furniture, blue china and blue curtains; she remembered that, when she had furnished the house, she had let Lizzie choose the things for her own room, realizing that it was her small castle in the world. She sensed the gratitude of the girl thus “pampered”—as Helen’s father had said—after the hard knocks that come to the mother of an illegitimate child; she understood at last the girl’s touching devotion to her, and guessed at her desperate fight with herself before she ran away with Wilson.

“A week ago I should have been much more annoyed with Lizzie than sorry for her. Oh, heavens, I *am* getting sentimental!” she said to herself, as she made the tea and cooked an egg for her breakfast. As she ate it she reflected that there was something wrong in the social system that put two lonely women together in a house as they had been, fond of each other, useful to each other, yet knowing nothing whatever of each other’s thoughts and fears and hopes. The house felt horribly empty as she sat reading her paper and eating her breakfast; Lizzie had filled the vases with flowers, left the table laid, cleaned and polished everything. Helen had had no chance, yet, to miss her services; but she missed her footsteps, her presence in the house, and was glad when the daily woman arrived and began to clean the steps. Before her breakfast was half finished, Louis Farne rang her up on the telephone.

“Are you very busy to-day?” he asked.

“Well—no more than usual, except that I’ve to find a maid.”

“New career for you! Who wants a maid?”

“I do. Lizzie ran away in the night. It’s a long tale, and I’m not going to tell it to you. I feel very sad about her. But I suppose I’ll have to get someone at once. Meanwhile, I think I’ll go and stay at Sharlock Street. I know Mrs. Winocks has a bed.”

“You can’t stay in that pestilential hovel! And with an old noseless woman! Why don’t you stay at home?”

"I loathe being alone, and what's her nose to do with it, anyway! But why did you ring me up?"

"Oh—that! Well, there's a case here that's worrying me."

"Andrewes?"

"Oh, no—it's a girl, and she's cured as far as we can cure her here. But I haven't the remotest idea what to do with her. I want her room. It occurred to me that a woman's advice——"

"*Really*, Louis, your humility is getting quite touching," she said with a laugh.

"I know."

"Then I'll run along—to tea, may I? Oh, and I forgot to say that my car's gone wrong. I'll have to cut out lunch altogether to get round. But can you be responsible for one of the dinner-cum-teas of the district—something really substantial? I'll be famished by tea-time."

She rang off with Louis Farne's laugh in her ears, and went about her morning's work, forgetting domestic troubles. Just before lunch she went down to Sharlock Street, and, walking instead of motoring, saw even more than usual of the homes, from the open doorways of which came cries of children, shrieks of nagging women, and thick odours of dirt. In the waiting-room at the surgery were five patients; three women in shawls with miscellaneous children, one man and one boy. They were all dressed in nondescript garments bought at jumble sales or given to them; they all smelt as if they had been long unwashed. Helen suddenly wondered if it would be possible and practicable to wash all her patients before she tried to cure them.

Before she had finished with them, Francis Reay looked in. He was haggard and weary-looking, but that was nothing new. She did not ask him of last night's vigil. She told him bluntly to go home, drink brandy-and-soda and put himself to bed. But he only smiled and asked her to come and see the pianola that Miss Wembley had bought for the Mission.

"Do come," he said, as eagerly as a child with a new toy.

"But my patients!" she said, gently.

"I don't mean now. Come when you've finished."

His eyes were so eager that she promised and, as soon as the patients had gone and she had used her Sanitas spray, she went across to the Mission. He and Mrs. Winnocks were explaining all the points of the new toy to each other; neither knew very much about it.

"In the winter we'll have it going at each Mothers' Meeting—they come mostly in winter, because it means free firing for the afternoon—and we'll start free cups of tea and buns; then I can talk to them."

"We students did the tea and bun stunt at the hospital," said Helen, with a reminiscent laugh, "to get the women to bring the kiddies up for vaccination. We had to do a certain number, you know, to get signed up. Mothers fight shy of vaccination as long as they can, because it makes the children cross for a while. But some genius hit on the plan of tea and buns and half-a-crown per arm for vaccinations, and we were inundated with them. Now, of course, it's compulsory. But I really believe some of the women had babies expressly for us to vaccinate."

Francis laughed at her, and went on talking about his Mothers' Meeting, explaining to her what a panic the women put him in.

"I say, now you've got the pianola, why not have a dancing mistress and teach the mothers to jazz? It's frightfully easy, and what a lot of good it would do them! I'll teach them if you like. I mean it!"

But Francis refused to take her seriously, and Mrs. Winnocks went off "all of a twitter," as she said, with excitement, to make up a bed for the doctor. They were left alone.

She looked round the Mission Church, brightly new painted, clean, roomy and airy. She sighed, a swiftly indrawn sigh.

"What's the matter, doctor? Jealous of my little church?" he asked gently.

"Just a little! I—I do so wish it was a great Roman bathroom—since you won't have it a dancing hall!"

"Heavens! Whatever next?" he cried, in amazement.

"There are over a thousand houses here, round the pits and the pot-banks, and there isn't a bathroom in one of them,"

she said, shortly. "Only two of the pits have pit-head bath-rooms, and not one of the factories has them at all! Do you know that the women make black sateen pillow-cases?"

"Oh yes, Miss Wembley told me that—they do it at the Mothers' Meeting—to save the washing!"

"Just think of it! And the women object to the pit-head baths because they say the men get cleaned up there and don't come home all evening. If I were a man working all day, and only Lower Shellpit to come home to, I—I'd enlist! As for the women—they never, by any chance, get a wash all over."

"There are the public baths."

"Yes, a tuppenny car-ride away from here, and threepence or fourpence each bath—pretty steep, when you've seven or eight children."

"So you'd make my church a bath," he said, looking round it adoringly.

"I would, really. There was a picture in *Punch* a few weeks ago that started me thinking about it. It made my blood boil. Two little gutter kiddies were looking into a chemist's shop window, all arrayed with bath salts, bath soap and so on. One said to the other, 'Ever had a bath, Bill?' 'Yus,' said Bill, 'once I fell into ve Serpentine!' You know, I felt sick for a minute at the awful, fearful cynicism of a nation that could make a joke of a thing like that, and laugh at it. Then I saw that they just didn't know. But *we* know—there's not very much condemnation for those people who laugh at poor little Bill, because they're merely unintelligent. But—oh, Mr. Reay, let's make plots and plans. Can't we get one or two of those big houses in Martin's Street—you know, where the Derrys live, those people who live in droves, and have such a dreadful name in the district? If we could get those houses, and have a dozen or so baths, and a playroom for the kiddies while their mothers get bathed—and—yes, a pianola to teach them to dance, and get rid of a lot of their unhealthy fat."

"It certainly wouldn't be a bad idea," he said, smiling at her.

"It would halve my work! Halve it, why, it would reduce it to one-tenth if we could compulsorily wash everyone. Until

they build baths in every house, if we could just get these bath-houses in every street——”

She stopped, her eyes alight; as she talked, all the ramifications of the scheme came to her; it seemed such an easy, practicable thing to do, and it would have such immense results.

“It’s a dream!” she cried, and fell to thinking how it could be accomplished. He started, looked at her doubtfully, made up his mind and spoke hurriedly.

“Doctor, talking about dreams! I had the queerest dream last night. Do you believe in dreams, or are they also one of the old superstitions you have rooted out?”

“Oh, dreams—they’re fascinating, I think!” she said; something suddenly warned her to be casual, not to frighten him. “I have the raciest dreams.”

“This dream,” he said, quietly, “is so queer because I don’t seem to come into it at all. And it’s apparently a scene out of some Eastern drama, judging by the dress of the people, and the trees. But I’ve never been further East than Italy.”

Then he told her the dream, and she, seeing the symbolism of it, sensed all the repression, the unconscious conflict of his mind. She flushed hotly when he finished speaking; she turned away, to look through the frosted window. How could she tell him that he had laid his soul bare before her, that, in the youth underneath the trees, taking the girl in his arms, she could see him? She wondered what to do—whether to make herself brave, and tell him—and immediately she thought of Louis, who, after all, understood people’s psyches much better than she did.

“Queer dream, wasn’t it?” he said, a little disappointed that she was not more impressed.

“Very. Does it bear on anything you have been reading lately?” she forced herself to say.

“Well, no,” he said, doubtfully; “only that sentence of the youth’s—about his father’s business.”

“Well, of course, you often think in Bible phrases, don’t you?”

“Yes—unconsciously more than consciously. I mean, I

think Bible thoughts and translate them before I speak."

She made a note of that. "It must be rather jolly to get away, out of Shellpit into a moonlit cedar grove."

"I hope I dream again," he said, sighing a little. "One wants to escape from reality sometimes."

She shuddered. She had read that sentence in Craig that morning.

"Should you remember if you saw those two again? It's almost like Robert Louis Stevenson, dreaming his stories, isn't it?"

"I should never forget their faces," he said, solemnly.

"Then do tell me! I'm awfully keen to know what happens to the boy and the girl."

"Now a thing was secretly brought to me, in thoughts from the visions of the night; when deep sleep falleth on men—fear came upon me and trembling," he muttered.

"More Bible?" she said, and he turned away, hurt that she could be flippant about what had so troubled him, while she went across to the surgery again, frowning, more than ever frightened for him.

CHAPTER VII

THE Cranmare Neurological Hospital was three miles out from Shellpit Town Hall. A hundred acres of moorland had been given, with ten thousand pounds, under romantic circumstances, to Louis Farne to start the place. A poor rich old man, Alfred Cranmare, a manufacturer in the district, had made a lot of money and lost three sons in the war; his only daughter had been drowned in the *Lusitania*, and the last boy had come back from a German prison camp, shell-shocked, partly paralyzed, the mere shadow of a man. Louis had cured him—his was not really a very bad case—and had given him back to his father, by what the old man thought a miracle. Old Cranmare had staked all his hopes on his son, who, returning to the factory to look at the rich property that was to be his some day, was killed instantly by an ill-laden crane. Stunned at the futility of everything, the father had sold the factory and, settling in a small house on the moor, from which he could see the smoke and flares of the district and the rapidly rising walls of his hospital, sent for Louis, who seemed, to him, more than human.

And now, when everything had been taken from him, the old man sat, like Ulysses in his adventurous small boat, watching from his moorland eyrie another quest, to which he had given all his great fortune. A sinus of the moors hid the factories and the little mean houses and the pit-heads from the hospital; only the ever-rising pall of smoke could be seen from the gardens. A hedge of privet and hawthorn, gorse and laurel, fenced the hundred acres of moorland, just as any great garden might be fenced, without any suggestion of imprisonment or restraint. The whole place was Colonial in appearance; Louis Farne had lived much in Australia, and liked the sun-drowned, wind-swept simplicity and roominess

of Australian architecture. Just inside the unpretentious oaken gates of the colony was the Staff House where the nurses and the doctors lived, right away from the patients when they were not on duty; further on in the moor was the hospital for the physically incapacitated cases; further still, the sun parlour, the various sorts of curative baths, the gymnasium, the school, and the electric plant worked ardently by some of the patients. About the moor were dotted the houses, each perpetuating the memory of one of old Cranmare's dead children—small houses, built in the shape of a Maltese cross so that they might catch every moment of sun and the wind from the distant hills. The place was a sheer delight to Louis—the gardens where his neurotics worked themselves well again; the school where they got back a grip on life and the world outside, learning languages, doing mild scientific experiments, learning to cook or manufacture as their fancy dictated, always with the idea of helping the community, though most of them wanted to shower attainments at the feet of the doctor who went about among them so simply, so casually, bringing healing by the confidence his personality aroused in them. Embarrassing numbers of flowers and vegetables from their gardens, eggs from their little poultry runs, carvings and pictures and even poems and letters from those who were too ill to do anything else, found their way to the doctor's quarters.

Helen was fortunate in capturing one of the few taxis of the district, and in half an hour felt the exhilarating air of the moors in her face as the taxicab climbed the cratering hill. At the Staff House, the nurse who was sitting on the wide verandah, giggling, with a copy of *The Young Visitors* open on her lap, said that the doctor was in Clive House—the House that got its name from the shell-shocked boy.

"I'll send for him, doctor," said the nurse, springing to her feet.

"No, sit down and rest, nurse. I'll go to him," said Helen, going through the grove of pine trees that had been left standing there, straight and tall on each side of a red-tiled path where the patients, in waterproof shoes and coats, took exer-

cise when the rain swept down from the hills too fiercely to allow of gardening or games.

Along the bricked path was walking an old man in a Sabbathical coat of black broadcloth, carefully creased trousers, and shiny silk hat. As she came up to him, he raised his hat and his soft white hair floated in the wind; he looked at her and smiled; she recognized old Carnelly, whom she had done her vain best to save from gaol; she had not known that Louis had taken charge of him. He smiled at her. The strained look that had so grieved her in the court had gone; his eyes were the soft, bright blue eyes of a child.

"Good-afternoon, doctor," he said, holding out his hand. She shook hands with him—he gave her the typical damp, gripless hand of the senile dement. "I have wanted to see you, to thank you for all you did for me that day in court. Of course it was hopeless—we are scarcely past the days when people were stoned for having infectious diseases, or killed for being troublesomely ill."

"You realize that you were ill then?" she asked. "And you are better now?"

"Quite. They sent me here after two months in Stopford Gaol. They were really very kind there, according to their lights, and as far as the law would let them be. But here I gain strength every day. You are looking for our doctor?"

"Yes; nurse tells me he is in Clive House," she said, beginning to walk on slowly.

"If you will skirt the side of this little grove with me, you will not be more than a moment longer, and I have something to show you," he said, eagerly.

Helen went with him, ready for any impulse that might take him. At the edge of the grove he stopped. A great pine, very much older, straighter than the rest, stood at the apex of a triangular patch of trees.

"I can understand tree worship," he said, softly, raising his hand to bid her listen. "Can you hear the wind of the Spirit in the trees?—a soft, hushing sound. It is very soothing. It makes me forget everything."

The trees were nodding gently, and the sound of the wind

in the branches was a tender, liquid swish like a calm sea running in on shingles.

"You see that tree, there, doctor—the tall one?" he asked. "It spoke to me this morning. It is God the Father."

"Oh yes, I see," she said, with an air of discovery.

"There, beside it, is God the Son—that tree smaller, struck by lightning that left only those cruciform branches. You see? The Cross—exceeding marred."

He looked at her anxiously, keen for her belief.

"Yes, I see. It's queer I never noticed it before."

"Your eyes were holden. But it is my work to teach you. There, you see, doctor, running all about the beautiful green robes of God the Father and the starkness of God the Son is the Holy Spirit—do you see?—all the brightness of the sunshine and the softness of the wind!"

"Yes, I see it," she said, softly; "thank you for telling me." She gave a sigh of relief as she turned aside, leaving him in his church.

Louis Farne was in the lounge hall of Clive House; she saw him through the big glass doors, taking tea with some of his patients who were sitting about in little groups. He was apparently telling them a yarn, for there was a burst of laughter just as she opened the door. The room smelt of primulas; they seemed to be everywhere, on all the windowsills, on the little tables where books and periodicals were stacked, and on a table at which a young man of twenty-five or thereabouts sat writing urgently. All the patients in Clive House were alcoholics—Dr. Farne's "pets," Helen called them.

In a deep window, away from the rest, a worn-looking elderly man was sitting at a typewriter, working slowly and painstakingly. They had found no way of interesting him until Louis had remarked to him one day that some lectures he had once given needed careful revision and typing; so Walton, who had been a barrister, revised them quite out of recognition, borrowed a typewriter from Louis's secretary for two hours every day, and taught himself to type.

A pretty old lady was playing hostess, and offered Helen tea. She refused anything else when Louis laughingly reminded

her of the feast awaiting her at the Staff House. Beside him, talking to another girl, was someone she had not seen at Clive House before—a little creature, obviously French, with blue-black, beautifully dressed hair, big, mournful eyes like deep brown wallflowers, and a complexion of that opaque creaminess that seems exclusive to some Frenchwomen. Louis introduced her as Mademoiselle Rousseau, and Helen sensed at once that she was the patient who was causing him anxiety. She was sewing, embroidering a piece of fine muslin very beautifully. After a few moments' conversation Helen asked what she was doing.

"I mek blouse for Nurse Barrne, Madame," said the girl.

"How beautifully you do it!" she said, envying the small white hands their skill.

"It is not'ing," said the girl, with a shrug. "Lot t'ing I mek for myself—nevaire 'ave I made t'ing for anot'er person before."

She turned to help another patient use her big clumsy English hands on a piece of muslin as she used hers—a hopeless task. After a while Louis stood up, and Helen said good-bye to the French girl, who bowed to her and turned away. As they passed the boy who was writing so busily, Helen paused an instant. He looked up, eager and excited.

"How's the novel going to-day?" she asked.

"Oh, I've got over that difficulty about the poison."

"Have they found out where Danby got it?"

"No—that's the whole plot. That doesn't come out till the last chapter. But that psychological difficulty, of making a man like Danby do a murder at all—I've worked that out top-hole! I say, doctor——" he added, rather bashfully.

She broke in:

"Want me to read it?"

"If you really wouldn't mind! Just the first four chapters—I've never written anything so long before. But Walton's going to let me have a bang at the typewriter, and I'll get it typed for you this week!"

"Great! Let me have it to read on Sunday, then, will you?"

He returned to his work with even increased ardour.

"It's you who have set that lad going, Helen!" said Louis, shortly, as they went up the bricked path. "I say, this type-writer stunt is really good; they're like kids trying to get a turn at it. I've ordered one for each house. It's quite good for them, if they don't do it too much—it needs concentration and care, but not enough to tire them. But it's Jacqueline Rousseau I'm worrying about just now. I thought perhaps you could suggest something."

The gaiety had gone from his face; he looked tired, unenthusiastic suddenly.

"Go ahead!" she said, shortly, only too ready to shoulder something for him. Her eyes followed old Carnelly walking among his grove of trees.

"She was brought here by the police three months ago—attempted suicide. All covered with the bromide rash; bromide tablets were apparently the only drug she had access to, so she tried to kill herself with them. When that failed, she set fire to herself."

"But what was it?"

"Love affair, of course! She's a charming little person, really, with the morality of a dragon-fly. The nurses are quite sentimental about her, and as for the patients! But you'll be just as bad: she's one of those exceptional girls who have women as well as men falling in love with her. It's physical, I suppose—being so tiny—like Mary Pickford on the films."

"Well, suppose we miss out the rhapsodies and get to the story?" said Helen.

Louis, laughing and striding slowly beside her, went on:

"It's quite a common tale. The well-bred French girl's protected upbringing, you know, a succession of convents; then she seems to have been taken possession of by a *demi-mondaine* of sorts—rather lurid sorts, from what Mlle. Jacqueline says. Her convent mind got a lot of shocks, I should think, and there was a general slackening of tightly stretched moral fibre. The inevitable man came along, with all sorts of promises; she was bowled over and came to London with him. But she never saw him after he left her 'for a few minutes' on Charing Cross Station. She hadn't a word of English; she

sold her clothes and jewellery, getting badly cheated; there was a child, I gather, born in some sort of institution. At last she met a boy, an irresponsible, picturesque sort of young poet, in a café to which she drifted as waitress, and they lived together. What happened to the baby I have no idea, though she talks about it a good deal, Nurse Barnes tells me. They lived together for about two years, during which their life was a series of fasts and feasts—most of the feasts being provided by the girl. Oh no, not by immorality—by needlework. You saw how beautifully she does it. I asked her why they hadn't married. She sighed, and shrugged, and said: 'I cannot marry 'im, Monsieur. I t'ink to my shildrens, and I am dirty girl.' 'Shildrens,' I may tell you, is only one—her English is still rocky. He never let her learn English because I gather he brought rather queer, degenerate people to their room, and he wanted her to keep her charm."

"Poor little thing!" murmured Helen.

"There you are. Everyone gets like that about Jacqueline," said Louis. "Well, after a time, the young poet had sowed all his wild oats and went home to the paternal roof-tree to marry a cousin and eat fatted calves. Jacqueline, once more alone, found it worse than before. The first time she was wildly, tragically at sea; this time she was hideously unhappy, because she was in love. She followed him here with her last pennies, just in time to see him married to the respectable and respected young cousin. It sent her completely mad; and that's all there is to it. She's well now—as well as one can make her in this sort of seclusion; her illness she calls a *crise des nerfs* brought about by anxiety as to what would become of her, terror at going back to the life of the streets, and grief at losing him. Queer, how love takes women, isn't it?" he added.

"Very," she said, her cheeks flaming.

He went on, thoroughly anxious about his subject.

"And now, frankly, Helen, I want her room—and I want her to get away from here. But what on earth am I to do with her? I'd send her to my mater, but the child would be miserable—in fact, they both would. She can embroider beautifully, but there's not a decent living in that, and it only keeps

her fingers occupied, leaving her brain and her heart empty. She tells me, with disconcerting frankness, that she's terrified of the streets—'der man is der dirty beast, Monsieur,' she says to me, solemnly and uncomplainingly, with an air of imparting instruction. She's got to have something to take the place of that damned little puppy of a poet—and she's got to have a home."

"What about getting her where her child is?"

"She hasn't told me anything about the child. She has discussed prostitution with me till I feel I could write a guide-book to the subject—though I don't believe she knows it personally so much as from living with other girls. But——"

They reached the verandah of the Staff House; Louis had put off his lunch to keep Helen company, and now, though it was only four o'clock, they had a thorough meal out in the spring sunlight.

"It's a pretty awful problem, this of Jacqueline Rousseau, isn't it?" he asked, after a while.

"I don't know. The economic problem is not nearly so difficult as the moral one. Certainly someone's got to be found who will care for her until she can care for herself."

"Yes; but honestly, Helen, do you know anyone like that? You can't stick her down in a working-class home, to go to work in a shop. At least, you can, but it's simply putting her back on the streets. A girl like that demands the refinements of life. And I certainly can't think of anyone I can ask to give her a home."

Helen sat frowning at the moor, thinking. At last she turned to Louis.

"Why, Louis, I'll ask her to come and stay with me! Why not? Supposing we hunt up her child, and see what's to be done? Anyway, it will be a stopgap. We ought to tell Mr. Booth her pathetic story and let him put it in the *Daily Comet*. She'd have heaps of offers of marriage from impressionable people at once. But seriously, if you think she'll be happy in a little place like mine——"

She broke off, waiting his views on the subject.

"Really, Helen, you're awfully good to me," he said, grate-

fully. "It's abominable to go and throw people out on the rubbish heap when you've spent ages mending them up."

"It won't be easy to invite her," said Helen, meditatively. "If she suspects charity, or any idea of reclaiming her——"

"Oh, you'll manage that," he said, calmly, and they arranged that she should write to Jacqueline that night.

Then, as they sat and smoked, she told him of her plan for cleaning up Lower Shellpit.

"I wish I had tons of money, like you have," she said. "How much would it cost?"

He got out a sheaf of plumbers' estimates, builders' costs and the like, and they studied them together; she became more enamoured of the idea every minute.

"If I could get hold of one of those old houses in Martin's Street! I don't see why I shouldn't get Ruthers to give me one rent-free, do you? I've a good mind to ask him. He's rolling in money, and now he's in Switzerland getting better he may feel grateful to me for having been rude to him. Because he'd never have gone otherwise. Anyway, I'll try."

But as she spoke she was deciding to write to her banker that night to ask him to dispose of about a thousand pounds' worth of shares, her sole fortune.

"I saw Francis Reay again this morning," she said, presently, as they watched one of the sudden rain-storms sweep across the moor towards them.

"You worry about him as much as—no, more than I worry about this whole hospital," he said, watching her carefully.

She flushed as she had flushed before, and said coolly:

"I believe I do. I have been thinking about him all day—very much all day, as a matter of fact, because I never slept last night, and at five o'clock this morning when I saw him coming out of church looking the very picture of exhaustion——"

"Where on earth were you at five o'clock?" he interrupted.

"Bathing—cold, icy-cold bathing," she said, with an awkward laugh. "Sleep was hopeless, so I got up to read. Apparently Francis Reay couldn't sleep either. He stayed in the

church all night; I suppose he slept there for a while, because he had a dream. He told me about it this morning."

"Well?" said Louis, interested in an instant, knocking off his cigarette ash into a neat pile on the red-bricked floor of the verandah.

"He was upset about it—but not nearly so much upset, as a matter of fact, as he would have been if I hadn't treated it all very casually—talked of superstition, and so on, and laughed at dreams." Then she told him the dream, vividly as Francis had told it to her.

"What do you make of it?" asked Louis.

"I want to know what *you* make of it, Louis. It seems to me that he's—he's symbolizing Christ in that boy—the cedars, you know, and carrying wood—and his father's business. And then Mary——"

"Which Mary?" asked Louis, softly. "His mother? No! Mary of Bethany, perhaps."

"He—Francis once told me that my house was like Mary of Bethany's to him," she said, in a low voice.

Louis looked up sharply.

"Oh—for all that, I think he meant the other Mary in the dream. To him, a priest, she would be symbolical of—well, the flesh, wouldn't she?"

"That's what I thought. You see, Francis is fighting. I've seen through him quite a long time now. Do you know, I nearly suspect him of a hair shirt? He's like that! And—oh, isn't it idiotic! Francis obviously has some Church-ridden, mediæval kink about chastity."

"Chastity meaning?" broke in Louis.

"Celibacy, of course—literal and spiritual. It's hard for everyday people like you and me to realize how far these ideas can eat into the minds of men steeped in mysticism and stuffiness as these religious folks are. They seem to make bogeys, and then ask God to help them kill the bogeys, and have that counted to them for righteousness. Can you or any sane person see why a man like Francis should not marry? It would kill his particular bogey, I think. You see, he's so disciplined and so controlled—he needs a safety-valve somewhere and—

he needs taking care of." Her voice trembled a little, and Louis felt more and more uneasy. Before she had regained command of her voice, she broke out: "Do you think some men are born ascetics?"

"I doubt it," he answered, slowly.

"So do I. I think—a few women, perhaps, not many. But I can't conceive of a man without at any rate the capacity for a struggle between flesh and spirit, with all his sympathies and desires on the side of the flesh. That dream last night certainly gives Francis away."

"In his dream he has apparently put Christ, who symbolizes chastity for him, in the position he is in himself, you mean?" said Louis.

"Yes—and the boy fled. He'd do that."

She held out her hand imperatively for another cigarette, lit it and gave a sudden laugh.

"I say, doesn't it sound fantastic, Louis? Two of us here, in the year of grace 1919, solemnly tucking into an enormous meal, and then sitting back and talking about Christ and dreams and love affairs! If people could hear us, I'm sure they'd think we were the patients, wouldn't they?"

But he was not deceived by her flippancy; he answered abruptly.

"Dreams and Christ and love affairs—and also meals! They're not a bit fantastic, old girl. They're fundamentals," and then he added, looking with fixed interest at his cigarette: "But really—he ought to be married. He's worth bothering about, is Reay. It needs my mother up here, to match-make for him. I'd like to see him safely married."

"That's the last thing you will see unless he has an earthquake in his brain."

"An earthquake in his brain is not the least possible thing on earth," said Louis, thoughtfully. "But don't you think there's any chance to get him cleared up? Psycho-analysis?"

"Not a bit. He'd resist too much," she said promptly. "If I said anything to him that took away one of the veils of his mysticism, or changed one rumour of his faith for knowledge, he'd fight shy of me. I nearly lost his friendship at first,

and I don't want to do that. You know what these religious people are."

"Um—I do," he said. "If only something could happen to him to make him see straight about Christ!"

"But it won't. He'll just have to go on being unhappy. Oh, doesn't it make you feel hatefully helpless? These walls of superstition!"

She lapsed into a gloomy silence. He watched her with grave concern.

"I wish to the Lord he'd gone into a Carthusian monastery to begin with, and never let himself loose on a world like this!" she said, with sudden savage intensity.

He frowned across at her, and stood up.

"I say, Helen," he said at last, "you're not by any chance in a muddle about your own feelings for Reay, are you?"

"Oh, be quiet! I'm going home," she said, and went off at a great rate through the heather.

CHAPTER VIII

THAT night, in her gloomy little surgery in Sharlock Street, Helen sat down to think. In the kitchen at the back a steady, dull thumping went on; Mrs. Winnocks was ironing. Though people would not have a woman so ugly working at their houses, they sent their washing to her, and she made it wondrous clean in the grimy air of Lower Shellpit. Prosperity had come to Mrs. Winnocks; her pay from Mr. Reay for cleaning the Mission was good; Dr. Clevion paid her well for the two rooms; and she had quite a lot of laundry work. Old Mr. Winnocks, who had asthma, and often sat choking for breath, was better fed than ever before in his life.

In the waiting-room Helen had put chairs, a table, and books. On cold days Mrs. Winnocks lighted a fire; sometimes, on her own responsibility, she left the washtub, and made cocoa for the snuffling, blue-fingered, frightened children brought there by their mothers to see the doctor. She could afford it, with all this new prosperity of hers. In the consulting-room was a plain oak desk, a surgical couch and three chairs, a gas fire and several cupboards; this was the merest first-aid sort of surgery for the very poor and bedraggled who were afraid to face the trim cleanness of St. Mary's Road. A dreary little room it was, for Helen had neither money nor time to spend on decorations. On the desk was a pot of white primulas sent from Cranmare, withering to a sickly yellow in the stagnant air of the place. In the window that looked out on to a back yard, and over that on to another back yard, was an old gutta-percha plant belonging to Mrs. Winnocks. She had had it many years; the stem had grown tough and wooden, the leaves had dropped off year after year as little, hopeful stunted buds had put out from the top. Now it was

taller than Helen, with only three drooping leaves at its summit. Its sickliness revolted her, but Mrs. Winnocks had begged that it should stay in the surgery, where it could get a few glimmers of the morning sun.

After much thought Helen wrote to her bank manager, asking him to turn her securities into cash; to a local builder, explaining her aims and asking for a rough estimate, and to Ruthers, who was still in Switzerland. Her letter to Ruthers was cynical, almost rude; she asked for one of the big, tumble-down houses in Martin's Street at a nominal rent, pointing out what she intended to do with it, how, at her own expense, she would improve his property and at the same time rid the district of what figured so often in the police court as a "disorderly house" and a plague spot.

"There isn't a bath in Lower Shellpit," she wrote, "and the women make black sateen pillow-cases because their husbands and sons make the beds so grimy when they come back from their work at night. Since the housing shortage has got worse, they sleep in the beds in shifts; there is always *someone* in bed. A doctor sees these things, you know, though they are hidden from most people. I know exactly what you will answer. 'The rents are very low: even rich people's houses didn't have baths in the days when those houses were built.' If I go on to tell you that aseptic surgery, anæsthetics and prophylaxis of almost every sort had not been heard of when those houses were built, I know you'll say, 'Yes, and if I gave them baths they'd use them to store coal or keep rabbits in,' because that's the landlord's stock joke. I've heard it in every slum I've visited yet. I suppose one tenant once kept coal in a bath, and his landlord repeated the tale till it became a legend. But that's beside the point. I want to become your tenant, and I shall certainly not keep coals in the baths I propose to put into my house."

When this letter, over which she smiled a little, was enveloped and sealed, she wrote to Jacqueline Rousseau. This note cost more effort than the others. It would be fatal to let the girl think she was being rescued.

"DEAR MADEMOISELLE ROUSSEAU,

"The doctor tells me that you are wanting to leave the hospital, but have not made any definite plans yet. I wonder if you would care to come and stay with me for a while? Shellpit is certainly not a health resort, nor is my little house very beautiful, and I'm a busy and not very nice-tempered sort of person. But it would be less lonely for you than taking apartments anywhere, and I might be able to suggest some plan that has not yet occurred to you. I shall be at the hospital to-morrow. Perhaps you will tell me then if you think you would like to come? I'm ashamed to say there is a great deal of selfishness in this idea of mine; my French has become extremely rusty, and next year I want to attend a lecture course in Paris. I simply must get someone to help me to polish it up before then.

"Yours sincerely,

"HELEN CLEVION."

She stamped the letters as she heard Mrs. Winnocks coming along the passage with a jingling that told of a supper tray in her hands. She brought it in and put it down on the desk. She had taken her bandage off in the heat of ironing; her face would have terrified anyone but a doctor.

"I thought you'd like a bit of something, working so hard all the evening, ma'am," she said.

Helen thanked her and asked if there was anyone about to post her letters. The old woman took them and was going out, but at the door she turned.

"Did you hear them Walls, ma'am?" she asked heatedly.

"Walls? No."

"After all Master Reay an' you done for her! Come in 'ere, 'er did, wi' that kid as ought for have bin in bed hours, askin' for soap and soda. This time o' night. I ses to her, respectable folks's washing doesna get put off till ten o'clock of a night, an' why couldna her wait for her soap an' soda till to-morrow? I'll tell Master Reay of her, that I will—starting of a week's wash this time o' night."

"Poor thing, probably she's been busy all day and wants

to do the work at night. In any case, I don't see what it has to do with Mr. Reay."

"Takin' the bread out of honest folks's mouths," cried Mrs. Winnocks.

With a sigh Helen resigned herself to a long tirade. Mrs. Winnocks's tongue was her weakest member.

She went out, leaving Helen to eat her cheese and biscuits, feeling even more hopeless than before. She seemed to have been put down suddenly into a nightmare; there was a hopelessly muddled room that must be straightened up, but as soon as she got chairs and tables, pictures and cupboards into ordered places, they were endowed with life and disarranged themselves again.

The next few days brought dreams, and the possibility of fulfilling them. The builder's estimates were lower than she had thought; her security at the bank, which she had estimated at a thousand pounds, was twelve hundred, and a letter from Ruthers amused, angered and delighted her at once.

"You amuse me, Dr. Clevion," he wrote; "for a clever woman you are so blind. Haven't you, during the ten years or so you have spent in learning humanity from the inside, found that humanity refuses to be helped? It's got to struggle by itself; *you* can't do anything but patch up bodies, you know, while your friend the parson gives opiates to souls. I had my dreams, my ideals, when I was a young man, but thirty years as an employer of labour have shown me that humanity is essentially dirty, ungrateful, self-seeking and, in fact, rotten. Now I'm the hardest employer, the sternest landlord in the district. I've no illusions left. Have your house, by all means. Take numbers one and three, Martin's Street. I've sent my agent instructions that the tenants get notice to-day to quit. (I suppose it has not occurred to you that the people you turn out thus must have somewhere to go? Do you see that all constructive work has its foundations in destruction, doctor?) You'll burn your fingers, mark my words. That is why I am giving the houses to you. I admire you; I'm grateful to you

for speaking plainly to me when you did, because Sir Luke Wayne says that it saved my life. I want to see you get cured of this sociological fever that has infected you just now. So go ahead, have the attack badly, and get cured. You won't get cured till you've been hurt. You're a clever woman, doctor, but you're not a wise one; you're prejudiced by your belief in humanity. I'm a wise man because I'm a disillusioned man, and believe in nothing but John Ruthers—and even about John Ruthers you gave me a devilish doubt for a while. I have told my agent to put the houses in a reasonable state of repair for you, but you are foredoomed to failure. That makes you get your back up, doesn't it, and set your teeth? Well, we shall see. Do not, please, write and thank me for being charitable. Those houses do not pay as it is; I shall lose very little in letting you have them for nothing. I am not helping you with your experiment because I want to help the down-trodden poor, but because I'd like you to learn what snakes they are. And I know you've honesty enough to admit it, if you do get beaten.

“Faithfully yours,
“JOHN RUTHERS.”

She wrote immediately to Ruthers, thanking him and reassuring him that she would never be so foolish as to think he did anything out of kindness. Before the week-end she had interviewed Mr. Waldron, the builder, and told him her plans.

The Agency sent her a new maid—a girl too well known in the district to have any skeletons in her cupboard; she stipulated that she should never be asked to clean knives, grates, steps or windows, and that she should have every evening out to attend Christian Endeavour and other meetings at her chapel. Also, she could not undertake to cook on Sundays. Helen, who had always sent Lizzie out in the evenings as soon as the busiest rush of patients was over, did not like these laid-down restrictions, but she had to accept them or do without Maud, who seemed a thoroughly competent girl.

On Saturday afternoon Mlle. Rousseau came to stay with her. She had gone to the hospital without possessions of any

sort; in her wild flight from London on the footsteps of fleeting love, she had left everything behind her, but the nurses and some of the patients who had been charmed by her had got together a few incongruously assorted clothes, which she accepted graciously and loathed unspeakably for their quite English lack of daintiness. She managed to drop them out of the taxi window as she crossed the moor, and arrived, a few minutes after Helen, with just what she was wearing.

Helen had had her first encounter with one of the Derrys who had been turned out of Martin's Street. He had, by means known only to himself, found out that she was at the bottom of his notice to quit and had come out of a public-house, lurching after her. He had sworn at her, and had shouted her name, together with Francis Reay's, embellished with every term of abuse he could remember. Helen had left him behind, surrounded by a jeering mob of his friends.

It was good to see the charming little Frenchwoman come in and stand beside the bank of ferns that concealed the fireplace; good, too, to see the great basket of flowers the patients had sent to her—spears of delphinium, mignonette, and a bunch of red roses from Louis.

"I am com', Madame," said Jacqueline, in her small, high voice. "I bring you bee-utiful flower from der *hôpital*."

"Oh, they're so lovely after Lower Shellpit," said Helen, burying her face in the cool rose petals. "How good of you to bring them! Has Maud shown you your room?"

"Yes, I t'ank you, Madame," said Jacqueline, sitting demurely and gracefully on the edge of the chair, her hands folded in her lap.

Helen laughed suddenly at her attitude, and said quickly, at the girl's startled look:

"You can't think how you remind me of a little girl sitting in church, very good and quiet, listening to a dull sermon. You look so intensely good, somehow."

"I am not good, Madame. I am dirty girl—I have shildrens," announced Jacqueline, with a little, soft sigh.

"Oh, good heavens!" said Helen, startled. "My dear girl, that's an awfully silly way to talk. Perhaps, later, when you

know me better, we'll talk about it." She broke off, embarrassed by Jacqueline's moral humility.

"I t'ink, perhaps, you did not know I have shildrens. Many people will not have dirty girl in its 'ouse," said the girl, her eyes downcast. "I t'ink you will not 'ave me if you know."

"Then you think quite wrong, my dear," said Helen, briskly. "I hope we'll be friends, Jacqueline—I can call you Jacqueline, can't I? Mademoiselle seems so formal for such a small person as you, and you look such a little girl."

"T'ank you, Madame—I like it, you call me Jacqueline," said the girl.

Helen turned to the flowers again.

"And now I must put these lovely things in water. Do you know, Jacqueline, when I put flowers in water, they look exactly like bundles of sticks? I haven't a scrap of art in my fingers."

"Voule you permet me, Madame?" said the girl, looking round at once for vases. Helen, having thus made her feel at home, ran upstairs to change into clothes that did not smell of Lower Shellpit.

As she came downstairs again she heard a queer little, grasshopper-like song; when she opened the drawing-room door quietly she stood for an instant watching Jacqueline, who was arranging the flowers with an artist's hand and eye, singing to them in a little shrill whisper, holding each of them for a moment to her lips before she put the stalk tenderly into the water.

"When I am wit' Ravigla in Paris, I mek flower everywhere in der house," she said, and rearranged a vase more to her liking. "Bee-utiful orchid, and *lys*."

Helen was watching the girl keenly as her delicate small hands caressed the flowers: she had a sudden misgiving about her; she felt that this small, unwealthy house was not her right *milieu*; she felt unable to cope with her, as though she herself were a child and Jacqueline a woman of many years and much wisdom. Then the door opened and Maud brought in tea and toast. Jacqueline played with the crimson roses as Helen poured out the tea.

"Juste littla piece tea, and lot water, please, Madame," said Jacqueline. "No milk, please. Tea mek my face com' yellow; milk mek me com' fat."

"I don't think the little milk you take in tea would make you fat," said Helen, laughing a little.

"I t'ink it," said Jacqueline, with an air of impenetrability.

Helen watched her curiously, hoping that she would never come to an argument with her. Jacqueline ate a very small piece of bread-and-butter daintily and then, holding the flowers on her lap before her face, said slowly:

"Madame, did you know I am dirty girl when you ask me here?"

"My dear! I knew you—you had had a child, if that's what you mean," she said, pausing to choose her words. "But—you'll find that doctors don't look at these things in the conventional way. They see all round things more than ordinary people do."

There was a long pause. The girl's eyes narrowed; her lips were caressing the petals again as she said, her eyes intent on Helen's:

"Are you clean woman, Madame?"

Helen gasped.

"Jacqueline! If you mean—well, what you apparently do mean, yes. A woman in my profession hasn't much reason to be otherwise, you know. We're not looked upon as women. But whatever makes you ask me like that? It's—rather embarrassing, you see."

The girl frowned, her wallflower eyes very earnest.

"When I have my shildrens, some woman is very gentle for me—all dirty woman. It give me *monnaie*, and food and milk for der *bébé*. Clean woman look at me like I am *peste*. Der nuns say to me I can nevaire com' clean any more!"

"Well, that's all rot, Jacqueline," said Helen, decidedly. "Do you smoke?" she added, lighting a cigarette. Jacqueline shook her head; Helen went on, between puffs of smoke: "Dr. Farne and Nurse Barnes are what you would call clean people, aren't they? And they don't talk to you like that."

Jacqueline, fascinated by the humorous mouth, the wise eyes, looked at her and said, meekly:

"I 'ave understood, t'ank you, Madame!"

Helen wrinkled her face, gave herself a shake and went on, quickly.

"Oh yes—as I was saying, having a baby very often means a momentary weakening of control; it's the same sort of weakening that lets people say beastly cruel things to each other, or murder each other under sudden provocation. They're awfully sorry afterwards. You know, a woman who'd be horrified at—at what they call immorality, might quite easily be guilty of it in an emotional crisis. I'd never judge her for it, knowing how easily emotional crises happen."

Jacqueline certainly looked, then, as if she needed a life-buoy, and Helen added quickly:

"I don't, myself, think the fact that you've had a child, and are not married, in itself makes you any different from me. Have you understood that?"

Jacqueline nodded doubtfully.

"Mind, Jacqueline, I don't say it's desirable for girls to have unlimited numbers of babies without the—the—oh, Lord, this language!—the economic protection of a husband. Partly because our laws and our ways of thinking make the woman suffer pretty severely, and the child even more. You loved that man, I suppose—and had an emotional crisis. You have them often—you tried to kill yourself in one of them."

"I am *vaire triste* dat time I keel myself," said Jacqueline.

"I know, my dear—and that time you ran away with the man, you were just the opposite of *triste*! Don't you see? You want to keep more on the level. I'm horribly sorry for you being so *triste*, but I'm just as sorry for you being so emotional, my dear. And I don't blame you for either things—you were just—just—is it *épuisée* I mean? No—bowled over."

"Yes, Madame!" said Jacqueline, looking at her deprecatingly.

"Perhaps I'd blame you if you did it again, after having suffered so much. But I certainly don't look upon you as a

'dirty girl,' as you so funnily put it. I'll take you to Lower Shellpit if you like, to see real dirty girls, and you won't be so keen to call yourself rude names then. But where is the child, by the way?"

"I cannot tell, Madame. I leave 'im in *étrangère* door. I t'ink perhaps he is in der America now, or perhaps in der Australie." Jacqueline gave a sad little shrug as she hid her face again in the roses. "I t'ink all der time to my shildrens—he are so t'in, an' he crie, crie all de time."

"But do you mean that you deserted him?" cried Helen, in sheer amazement that made her sit up sharp in her chair.

"In England it is 'ard to put away a shildren! In France we 'ave der *Enfants Trouvés*—juste basket in der door; one puts in der *petit*, ring der bell and walk away—slow, slow! In der England eet is question, question, and 'Perhaps I voule 'elp you.' Oh, des fool Engleesh!"

Her white cheeks had little spots of colour now, her eyes were darkly gleaming. Helen stared in astonishment; she could understand a girl who deserted her child, but she could not understand a girl who made no excuse for it.

"But—you know, Jacqueline, you do surprise me! Would you like to tell me all about it, or wait till you know me better?" she managed to say at last.

"I voule tell you now, Madame," she said. Her voice was a queer, highly keyed monotone as she told her story, impassively, almost as though reciting a lesson.

"First, I am in convent, wit' nuns. Oh, vaire quiet, vaire gentle. All de day it is embroidery or rosary; all der time I t'ink w'at is outside der wall, and der wind in der tree say, 'Jacqueline, *taisez vous*; keep you quiet!' All der girls spik so soft, so gentle—about Our Lady, and der saints—ah, der *sacré* saints!" she added fiercely, her eyes lighting up and growing dull instantly. "Nevaire 'ave I wash me wit'out me chemise; der nun say my body are full de sin. Always, in der *dortoir* all der shildrens creep, creep under de bed to make on clean clothes, for fear we see des bad, vickid body."

"Really? Were they as silly as that?"

Jacqueline nodded.

"One day, when I have seventeen, Ravigla com' wit' my mot'er. Ravigla say, '*Charmante!*' and Reverend Mot'er show my embroidery. So I embrace all der nuns, and 'ave rosary, and holy picture, and scapular, and I embrace all der girl, and go away wit' Ravigla. Nevaire I see my mot'er again. Her *monnaie* are all gone; Ravigla give her *monnaie* for me."

"And Ravigla? One reads and hears things about her—queer things sometimes."

"She are bee-utiful, *riche, charmante*. All de time I 'ave servante dress me, do everyt'ing. Ravigla laugh when I am modeste; soon I laugh too. Lot of man com' in der 'ouse. One old man *reste* dere. One day his wife com'. She crie and crie, and Ravigla laugh. But der old man stay and de wife go away and crie in motor-car. Ravigla treat man like der dirty dog, but always man give her *monnaie*. Always she laugh and say to me: 'Jacqueline, *ma chère*, der man are der dirty beasts. Der man are only good for paid t'ings for der woman.' Der fool man like pay for Ravigla. Many times I crie. Der old man are vaire gentle for me."

"You poor little thing!" murmured Helen.

"Ravigla are so bee-utiful and man com' to mek her hair different colour, yellow and *brun*, sometime white, sometime green, *pour rire!* Sometime, when she are going to drive, she mek on her hat and her shoe, wit' not'ing else, and laugh and ask der old man w'at she shall wear. Sometime she ask ot'er man. My face com' red, and I say, 'Pardon me, Madame,' and run out from der room. Dey all laugh for dat."

She sighed a deprecating little sigh, and stroked the roses pensively.

"Soon I am all mixe up. I love Ravigla and I 'ate Ravigla——"

"And then, I suppose, the inevitable man happened?"

"Yes. Mon Dieu, bee-utiful man! Américain! He are in film pictures; he say he make me in film picture too. When he say to me, 'Do dis t'ing, Jacqueline,' I cannot wait one moment till I do it. When he say to me, 'Com' away in der England, Jacqueline,' I com' away dat night."

"Oh, what idiots girls are! Want locking up," murmured Helen.

"Nearly a mont' we stay in Paris Plage. I am 'appy. I sing all der day, and laugh. I keess der trees and der floor, I am so 'appy. Den he say one day, vaire cross, we go in England. Again I sing, and all der world laugh at me because I am so 'appy. On der station at Charing Cross he say, '*Attendez un moment*, leetle kiddy! I buy papers!' And nevaire I see him any more. De man is der dirty beast, isn't it, Madame?" she added, wistfully.

"A few of them," said Helen, shortly.

"I tek my baggage and go in 'otel. Den I 'ave no *monnaie* and I am sent away, and dey 'ave my baggage—all my beautiful clothes. I mek my jewellerie in *Mont de Piété* for money, and so I live a leetl' few wik. I send ten francs in Paris to man for mek black magic; he mek *bébé* in wax and burn it, and tell me I have no shildrens. So I t'ink dat is all right. One day I 'ave no baggage, no *monnaie*, not'ing eat, and I am in der Park of Saint-Jacques, and crie and crie and crie. Policeman ask w'at I have, but he are Engleesh fool—he cannot understand w'at I say. Lot de people com' round and one man spik French. Ah, Madame, I want embrace 'im because he listen me, and he say he will tek me home. He say, 'Tell police I am your broder.' So I laugh, and say, 'T'ank you, monsieur,' and keess my hand to policeman, and soon I am in der home of der man. I stay wit' him three wik——"

"But didn't you know you ought not to stay with a strange man like that?" asked Helen, sharply.

"*Que voulez vous?* I 'ave no Engleesh, I 'ave no *monnaie*, no dress, no food. When dis man see I am ill, he send me away; he say if I do not go, he will give me to der police. So I 'ave five pound from 'im, and pass out from his 'ouse. Oh, lot t'ing com' after dat. Some time I am with man, some time I am in café in Dean Street, to be servant to dirty, hot people."

"But why on earth didn't you write to your mother?" asked Helen after a pause, while Jacqueline sat buried in painful thought, her face wistful and sad, but not at all complaining or accusing.

"*Jamais!* She t'ink I am dead. *Bien!* When dey pass me from der café, I walk in der street. Some man is rude, rude. I can see it in his face, but I cannot understand w'at words it say to me. Some man give me money and say, 'Run 'ome, kiddy!' I sleep in 'Y' Park—bee-utiful night, vaire warm. One day I see 'Notre Dame de France,' and I go in to Mass. Den I t'ink I am dirty girl and I go to der confession. I crie lot, and t'ink I am vaire dirty girl. M. le Curé say to me I stay wit' nuns, and, because I want be clean girl, I stay till my *bébé* are born. Der nuns pray, and trait me as if I am dirty girl—when I 'ave com' good!—so I tek my shildrens and pass out quick from de door. He are vaire t'in—I carry 'im like leetl' doll."

"Impulse again! You're a queer psychological study," said Helen.

"Yes, Madame," said Jacqueline, meekly, and for an instant Helen saw the little convent girl taking patiently a rebuke she did not understand.

"Soon I am hungraie, and my shildrens crie for milk. I go to big fat man in der street and say, 'Voule you, please, monsieur, give me one shillin'? My shildrens want milk, and I want dinnaire.' He cough lot, and say, 'My dear, you run 'ome wit' your mot'er,' and give me two shilling sixpence. After I eat dinnaire, and my shildrens sleep, I see anot'er big fat man, and he give me shillin'. Fat man always kind and gentle for little girl! It rain, now, and I sit in Charing Cross Station and all de world t'ink I wait for der train. For two penny I go to mek me clean. A woman nurse my shildrens while I am in der water. She say to me: 'He are vaire weak. He will need lot care.' Lot de girl com' in—girl wit' bee-utiful dress, but rude, rude and fat! It tek off lot de clothes and put on rouge and *poudre*—rouge like painting 'ouse, *poudre* t'ick as dust in der street. Not'ing fine, not'ing bee-utiful. Dis is English dirty girl—smell de *parfum*, common, workin'-class de *parfum!* Mek aristocrat seeck! Mon Dieu, I t'ink, 'Here am I, wit'out 'ome for my shildrens, and these great Engleesh pork are *riche*.' I look in *miroir*. I am more *vive*, more *charmante* dan dis *canaille!* I go queeck in Charlotte

Street where I live before, and der woman tek my shildrens for seventeen shillings sixpence every wik. Den I go back in Piccadilly Circus."

Helen's eyes narrowed; she had spent three months in the hospital where what Jacqueline called "dirty girls" went when they became ill and worn out and penniless; she had seen them depressed, defiant, bitter and frightened; she had never heard the other side of their tale before.

"I *reste* in Piccadilly Circus, and I look at der people. I look long time, and I 'ate it all. Someone say to me, 'Say, kid, what you doin' 'ere, looking like wet Sabbat?' and I see girl, *vaire gay, voire charmante*. I know in her dress and her voice she are Américaine, and I say, 'I com' find der man.' She laugh and say, 'Com' on, keed! I guess you an' me'll ginger up des old necrop'lis!' and I go in 'er flat and 'ave bee-utiful t'ing eat and drink. T'ree, six mont' I stay wit' May."

"And then, I suppose, you fell in love again?" said Helen, gently, a little incredulously.

"Yes, Madame—'e com' one night, when I am in café, and I lov' 'im. Soon I leave and live wit' 'im. He are bee-utiful poet. I tek *monnaie* for my shildrens every day, and all der time 'e com' more t'in, and white, white. De woman she say to me, *vaire rude*: 'You tek dis shildrens away from my 'ouse. He are dettestabl' shildrens! Nevaire vink de sleep do I 'ave. He crie, crie, and soon 'e will be dead, and den police com'.' I crie too. Dat day Rex ask me marry 'im. I tell 'im I am not clean girl. He say, 'Pouf! dat is not'ing!' Soon we 'ave no *monnaie*, because none of dis fool Engleesh want buy his poetrie. I mek blouses, lot blouses, all der day and all der night. Rex lie in bed; he mek bee-utiful poetrie while I work. My 'ead ache, and I am cold because we 'ave not *monnaie* for fire. When I go in street, it are wet wit' *neige*; my shoe is *vaire t'in*——"

"Beautiful specimen of a man," said Helen, shortly.

"Yes, Madame, he are *vaire bee-utiful man*," said Jacqueline, wistfully.

Helen sniffed scornfully.

"One day I go to my shildrens, and der woman shout, and say she will fetch police because he crie. So I tek it up queeck and bring 'im 'ome wit' me. Nex' day he mek me tek shildrens in de crèche—long way, in Step-ney. All day he is grombling, and read no poetrie. At night he mek me tek my shildrens and put it in *étrangère* door in Shepher' Bush——"

"But, my *dear*! However could you?" cried Helen. "Didn't you love the poor mite?"

"I lov' der bot' of dem. But der shildrens cannot talk, to tell me why I lov' it, and Rex talk lot!"

"Lord, that's illuminating!" said Helen under her breath.

There was a long silence when she had finished speaking. She looked at Helen, and then at the roses. At last she added, very politely:

"I t'ank you, Madame, for listen me so long time."

Helen felt undecided whether to smack her or put her arms round her and kiss her. Instead, she jerked herself up in her chair, poured out a cupful of tea that was quite cold and bitter, and drank it.

"And what are you going to do now?"

"I cannot tell, Madame," said Jacqueline, patiently.

"How much money do you make by your needlework?"

"I 'ave twenty-five shilling one week—but sometimes der man not paid me till der blouses are sold."

"And the other way—with the American girl?"

Jacqueline shrugged her shoulders, and calculated.

"Different man, different *monnaie*. Countryman, youn' man, lot de *monnaie*; drunk man, we tek all 'e 'ave; French, Américaine, Irish girl mek fifteen, twenty, fifty pound a week—more dan Engleesh girl, because Engleesh girl are rude, clumsy, like de big fat *porc*. No *chic*, Madame—no *art*."

It occurred to Helen that it was about time for her to begin to preach to Jacqueline, to try to bring some everyday morality into her make-up; and she realized, in the same moment, the hopelessness of trying. Jacqueline knew a great deal more about life than she did. And she would fall in love again and again, a queer mixture of mother and wife and courtesan love

with quite a lot of the celibate mixed up in it. Then there was the economic problem.

As though she had picked up the thought from Helen's mind by telepathy, Jacqueline said, quietly:

"Twenty-five shilling a week, work till my eye drop out and my finger drop off, and not paid every time! Ten, fifteen, forty pound a week, and sing and laugh, laugh——"

"But it's perfectly appalling to hang on to men like that, my dear!"

"Man 'ave everyt'ing in 'is 'and! De woman 'ang on 'im to get 'er life."

"Oh, no, no—that's nonsense, nowadays! Besides, you didn't hang on to Rex much."

"Oh, I lov' Rex," said Jacqueline, with her impenetrable air. "When I see Rex marry des fool Engleesh Meess I know dat she will keel everyt'ing fine for 'im, and 'e will lose 'is poetrie. She t'ink not'ing but puddeeng and *bébé*, like all der Engleeshwomen, and man t'ink w'at 'is wife t'ink! I do not know w'at I do now. I cannot mek blouses and live like a dog! I cannot live wit' dirty beast man again. Mon Dieu, w'at life!"

The roses she had been caressing fell from her hands in a shower of petals; to Helen there was something significant in the action, but Jacqueline looked at them and realized that they were not her own. She had destroyed flowers sent by a man to another woman—an incomparable *gaucherie*.

"Mon Dieu! Pardon, Madam! I brek up your bee-utiful roses!" she cried, as she knelt to gather the petals together, her face flushed with annoyance at herself.

"Oh, don't worry, Jacqueline! But what a queer little thing you are! You caress a thing one minute and break it the next."

"One day Rex say dat to me: 'All men keel de t'ing it lov'.'"

"Um—he would," said Helen, grimly, and settled back in her chair to grapple with the problem of Jacqueline.

Maud opened the door to fetch the tea-tray. She swept up the rose petals and removed a jug of water from which Jacqueline had filled the flower vases. She looked with stern dis-

approval at the little pile of cigarette ends that had accumulated in Helen's saucer, and with contempt at the masses of flowers. She seemed very hot; her pretty face was flushed and shiny. Her black frock and starched collar and cuffs looked horribly uncomfortable. Helen looked at Jacqueline's half-yard of transparent muslin, her own cool silk and said impulsively:

"Maud, wouldn't you be happier in a white blouse? I know I should feel dreadful on a day like this, in a hot kitchen in that black frock. Please don't wear it to please me, because it doesn't."

"I prefer it, thank you, ma'am," said the girl, impassively.

"Oh, just as you like; but a white, thin blouse through which the sun and the air can come would be much happier for you."

"I prefer plain clothes, thank you," said Maud, quietly, as she closed the door softly.

Helen decided that she was not going to like Maud very much.

It was a queer assortment of people in one small house. As time went on, Helen often wished impulsive Lizzie back again. Everything Maud did was done perfectly; the house was almost painfully well kept; the high light on everything that could be made to shine by physical violence was dazzling. But she missed Lizzie's welcoming smile when she came in, Lizzie's shy little gifts of flowers or cigarettes when she had her month's wages. Once or twice when she had been called out at night she had found the girl waiting up for her; several times when she had been sitting up late to read, a slight sound in the kitchen had told her that Lizzie, too, was sitting up. Maud worked for her wages, and earned them well, but Helen was her mistress and not a human being. She thoroughly disapproved of Jacqueline; of course she knew nothing about her past, but to her a "foreigner" was an object for the missionary enterprise of certain evangelization societies with which Maud's chapel was connected. Jacqueline was French—and therefore unregenerate. She disapproved of most of Helen's visitors, too. Miss Wembley was a well-known "church lady"; Francis

Reay was a priest. Maud had never been to either the parish church or the Mission, but she was quite convinced that horrible, Popish rites were performed therein—and Francis Reay, being a priest, was the arch performer. Her air of disclaiming all responsibility for him when she showed him into the room almost convulsed Helen every time, until he asked her what the joke was and they shared it.

For the first few days Jacqueline sat almost motionless in the drawing-room, looking like a little convent girl who had been told to be good until it was time for her to be taken for a walk. Helen was almost always out; she took Jacqueline with her in the car when she was going to any of the outlying places; riding round the dull streets of Shellpit was certainly not enlivening. She tried, on the country roads, to teach her to drive, but Jacqueline was completely uninterested in what she said was a man's work; she would sit, graceful and charming, talking when spoken to or sitting silent with an occasional whisper, "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu—w'at life!"

One day, when Jacqueline had been there a week, Helen came back from the hospital. Looking across at the girl, sitting unoccupied and bored, she said, casually:

"Jacqueline, did you notice that typewriter Mr. Walton was using at Clive House?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Do you think you could use one?"

"I 'ave not tried, Madame."

"Well, if Dr. Farne lends you one, will you try? Then, if you like it, I'll buy one for you. I'd be so awfully glad if you could copy a whole lot of notes of mine; they're badly written, and I often want to refer to them. And it would help you with your English, wouldn't it?"

Jacqueline showed unusual interest, and Helen 'phoned at once asking Louis, who now had six machines, to lend her one.

The next day, after tea, Jacqueline, with a charming pink flush, said:

"Madame, voule you pardon me—voule you lend me old chemise of yours while I wash mine?"

Helen stared at her, and looked startled.

"Why, my dear, how perfectly horrid of me! You didn't bring anything from London, did you?"

"No, my landlady kip all my t'ing because I have not ped 'er."

"Of course. Well, write to her and ask her to let you know how much she wants, and you must send her the money at once. And you really must get yourself some new things to-morrow."

"T'ank you, Madame," she said, and added, after a pause, "Dat Meess Vembley—do you t'ink she like me mek blouses for her?"

"I think she would. If I give you money, will you make one? and we can give it to her for her birthday. But you must make some pretty things for yourself—white things, you look so nice in white. Why, it's been like living on a desert island for you! I do wish you had told me before. But—if you stay here with me, and do all this work for me, I must pay you some money. Didn't Ravigla pay you for all those nice things you did for her?"

"She give me *monnaie* when she t'ink," said Jacqueline with a sigh.

"Oh, that's not the way to go on at all—you must know just how much money you have." She immediately arranged to pay her a salary every month, and to give her enough to get the things she needed next day.

"For me dress *existe* no more," said Jacqueline sadly.

"Well, then, make yourself pretty for me to look at you! Lord knows it's refreshing to see you when I've been looking at some of the people in Lower Shellpit all day."

There was a knock at the door. Helen recognized the soft, rather hesitating knock of Francis Reay. Jacqueline stood up, as she always did when a visitor was announced, to go to her own room.

"No, Jacqueline—stay here. I want you to meet Mr. Reay," said Helen.

"I 'ate der clerg'man," said Jacqueline in a low voice, her eyes calculatingly on Francis as he came into the room, with eyes only for Helen, holding both her hands in his for a

minute, gazing at her as though he were famine-stricken and she a feast.

"Five days, doctor, since I saw you. I'm beginning to get cross with Martin's Street."

"I'm beginning to get terribly worried with Martin's Street," she told him. "By the way, did you know Mlle. Rousseau was staying with me?"

He looked at Jacqueline in surprise. She made her queer, demure little bow, and said softly:

"I see M. le Curé lot time when I am in Aliéné House."

"Oh, it was you doing that wonderful embroidery, wasn't it, Mademoiselle? Old Andrewes so inextricably attached himself to me that day that I couldn't get across to speak to you. Otherwise I am sure I should have done so. Priests are privileged beggars, you know."

"What is it this time, Mr. Reay?" asked Helen, with a smile.

"I was going to give Mademoiselle a heart-rending account of the altar at the Mission, completely bare. Perhaps she would use that wonderful gift of hers in making an altar-cloth."

Suddenly Jacqueline's rather high laugh rang out, cynically; she flushed delicately, and said, in her small voice, her eyes downcast:

"When I am leetl' girl, M. le Curé, I mek lace for der *prêtre*, clot' for der altar. I cannot mek Church clot' any more. I am not clean girl."

Helen looked helplessly at Francis. Jacqueline looked from one to the other and said, guilelessly:

"You voule pardon me, Madame? Everyt'ing I tell der *prêtre*—he are not man! I go, now—if you voule excuse me, Madame?"

The next moment she had bowed and gone out of the room: Francis and Helen were a study in white and red. After a minute she spoke.

"Poor little girl! She has been so unhappy."

"Is she the child Farne was worried about?"

Helen nodded.

"She is staying with me till we can find somewhere for her to go. She's frightfully cynical. But your idea about the altar-cloth is quite a godsend; I'd just invented some needle-work for her to do, and I'm getting Dr. Farne to lend me a typewriter for her to learn—but she will want change."

He laughed suddenly.

"Queer, you two, giving an altar-cloth to the Mission! You call the altar paganism—and—well, what does she think about it?"

"I suppose she's a Catholic; probably she thinks quite a lot about it. Making it will help her find herself again—association with childhood, you know. That's all to the good."

He was staring at her, not listening. She threw away her cigarette that was smoking away by her side, and met his glance squarely.

"How I've missed you this week!" he said. "Every time I've been to Sharlock Street you have just that moment gone."

"Mrs. Derry and those Furbin people we turned out have spent their time waylaying me."

"They've almost lived on my doorstep, too. They seem to guess that you and I are in league against them."

"Well, so we are," she cried, hotly. "If I had my way, I'd put Mrs. Derry and her three girls in a lethal chamber. It's impossible to estimate the amount of disease and wickedness a house like that spreads through a district. They've had fifteen children between them, to begin with—most of them being supported by the public in one way or another—they're—oh, they're cancers——"

"Nothing but the power of Christ can save them," he said, his eyes glowing at her across the room, perfect confidence in their gaze.

Suddenly she sat up straight and leaned forward.

"That wouldn't be enough for these people. It wouldn't for most people, nowadays. We're too flippant, too hard; a few gentle, unthinking people may feel awfully flattered to think God cared enough about their tuppenny-halfpenny

sins to let His Son die as a sacrifice for them. But to people like the Derrys and the Furbins and the Willises it's just incomprehensible and laughable. They don't believe in God, to begin with; they don't *want* peace with God—they don't realize that there's a war on between themselves and God; how can they? If that's what you're depending on to cure your people you might as well give up at once. There's a tremendous logicalness about human beings that isn't going to be—well, fobbed off with superstition very much longer. But you look so tired! I'm wicked to argue with you. When do you take your holiday?"

"Holiday, doctor?" he said, with a smile, content not to argue but to sit and absorb her presence. "Why, I can't waste time on a holiday. There is so much to do—I can't waste a minute."

"You're looking fagged to death! And think what perfectly rotten sermons must come from such a tired mind as yours."

But he did not see the laugh in her eyes: he took it with a high seriousness.

"The word will come as the Spirit wills," he said, his voice shaking a little. "Besides, you will be needing all the help I can give you soon—those Derrys and Willises. Sometimes I feel as if they will beat me in the end; they seem too strong for me."

"Simply because you're tired, you foolish, foolish man," she said.

"Last night I dipped into the *Scholar Gipsy* when I went to bed. It brought it all back—Oxford, and dreams, such shining, spacious dreams they were, I remember! The water meadows—and the stripling Thames at Bablockhithe. I sometimes feel that I ought to have been a Scholar Gipsy, you know, doctor. Those lines last night simply tore me. Listen! 'The air-swept lindens yield their scent and rustle down their perfumed showers of bloom on the bent grass where I am laid——' But I mustn't! That sort of thought is treason!"

"It's far worse treason for a man deliberately to let himself become ill, as you are doing," she said, sharply; but he

was not listening to her. His elbows rested on his knees: his long, bony hands grasped his head, his fingers were buried in the thick hair.

"Thirty He was, when He came to His ministry, and for three years He went about doing good until they killed Him"—he was muttering—"despised and rejected—a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief—the chastisement of our peace was upon him——"

"Mr. Reay!" she broke in, almost in a whisper. She had not been frightened when old Carnelly had taken her in the pine grove; she had never been frightened of anyone, mad or sane, sick or well, before. But now she was frightened of Francis Reay—or rather, frightened for him.

"But sometimes He went back to His village and sometimes He went to Bethany. O Christ, did Thy Bethany tear the heart out of Thee as mine does?—Oh, what am I saying? This is blasphemy! Lord, give me Light—Light——"

Suddenly he sat back, letting his hands fall on to his knees with a gesture of utter exhaustion: his face was white, his dark eyes gleamed as though with fever, but did not look at her. She put her cool, strong hand on his. He looked down at it, trembling, and shook it off.

"Why will you make yourself so unhappy? Do you think God wants that of you?—making both of us—so—so—absorbed, so wretched?" she said, in a low voice.

"A living sacrifice," he went on, and she wondered if he were conscious of her or not. "But the loneliness! Oh, Christ, the loneliness of it! Yet He had friends, women, who came about Him——" Suddenly he looked at her, and said, in a quiet, conversational voice: "Doctor, have you ever thought about this—about the thirty years before His ministry? His hidden life. What discipline was He undergoing of which we know nothing? Why does He not show us the steps by which He fought and conquered?"

"But don't you think He does?" she asked, speaking as though she were humouring a child. "Don't you think Christ told us to live just sane, ordinary lives? I do—I think He counselled simple common decency and kindness to each other

as His discipline. All the other things that have got into the Gospel were put into it by His disciples, who were of much coarser clay than He. I'm perfectly sure He didn't want living sacrifices, or elect people. The disciples wanted those things; they were bred to them and couldn't think away from them. Christ meant everybody to be kings and priests—not just a consecrated, precious few.”

His eyes were wild, burning. His hands hung down limply; she took them in her own and held them, forcing his wandering attention by the intensity of her gaze, the thrill of her voice; yet, even as she spoke, the fantastic idea came to her that it could not be real—a man and a woman, with love quivering between them like heat-haze on a blazing summer's day, fighting each other about creeds. But it *was* real—the creed was a barrier barring out love and life.

“Are you listening to me, Francis?” she said, firmly. He nodded, and fixed his eyes on hers.

“Since you asked me to fight hand in hand with you haven't I done it?”

“You have—you have! It is I who have been unworthy,” he groaned.

“Oh, rubbish! Unworthy indeed! All that's unworthy about you is that you're still in the Middle Ages. Yes, you are—with your Mysteries and your fetishes fastened up from common understanding in a church and a creed! If you'd only throw away altars and sacraments, and stop wearing this sort of garb that marks you off from other men! Do you think, if your Christ came to Shellpit to-day, He'd recognize Himself in the Christ of the Church at all? I don't think He would! He'd be just as He was in Jerusalem—there wouldn't be money-changers for Him to turn out of the church. If money-changers set up business in such an unpopulated place nowadays, they'd starve.”

“But—what are you trying to make me do?” he cried.

“I'm trying to make you see what Christ would do. He'd turn out the barbarism of slums, to begin with, and He'd probably not go to ignorant fisher-folk to get His disciples. He might take a few—because they are simple and loving—

but He'd certainly collect all the great physicians and surgeons round Him, and wind them up to preach prophylaxis! He'd have them binding up the broken-hearted, and then He'd make the next generation so strong that they'd never get broken hearts any more. He'd lead captivity captive—and He'd get such perfect antitoxins that disease would give its last feeble kick and die."

He stared at her, drawn out of himself by her intensity. Then she laughed at herself.

"There—talk about egotism! If that isn't the doctor's point of view with a vengeance! A great painter would see Him painting the people's houses and dressing them in purple and fine linen till He'd made the New Jerusalem—and a great leader like Pericles or Lincoln or Cromwell would see Him a lawgiver, setting things straight——"

Suddenly she was standing beside him, her hands outstretched, her head in the air, her eyes shining almost like his, although she felt that she was being horribly melodramatic.

"Francis, why don't you throw off these superstitions? I can't help it if I am hurting you; your happiness and mine, and our work in this world, depend on it, because we're getting in each other's way now. Won't you forget that your Lord was the Son of God? He didn't talk about it much Himself—He liked best to be called the Son of Man. Didn't that mean that He thought man was God, if only he was given a chance to be?"

"Oh, God, give me light!" he groaned, his face again buried in his hands.

"Here is light, Francis, if only you'll look at it! Come and fight with me in all these dark places, under the banner of Christ the Rebel, Christ who fought dirt and illness and death and superstition as we are doing. Of course they killed Him in the end, but what did that matter? And when they'd killed Him they made a fetish of Him, but what does that matter either? Can't you see, my dear, that when He said, 'I and My Father are one,' He—He meant that humanity was divine?"

There was a long silence. His shoulders were shaking;

her breath was coming quickly. Softly her hand, trembling a little, caught his wrist, and he did not move. When she spoke again her voice had lost its quickened thrill of inspiration; it was low and vibrant, even a little shy.

"There, Francis! You know now what's in my mind. I never thought it would happen to me—and I feel a pretty considerable fool, having to tell you! But you've got into my imagination, and you've certainly got into my work. And I want you in it more——"

He still sat silent; her fingers caressed his wrist as she waited, and at last he turned a white, miserable face to hers. His eyes were black with tragedy, the lines about his mouth were drawn and haggard.

"Oh, God!" he cried.

She stood away from him, with parted lips, waiting for what would happen. He stood up, too, with a sharp, uncertain drooping of the left side that righted itself in an instant. For a whole, age-long instant his eyes devoured her; the next his hands were gripping her shoulders, burning through the thin silk of her blouse. He snatched her roughly and, with agony in his face, kissed her lips. She yielded herself in the kiss and seemed to draw him to her.

"My dear!" she whispered. "Oh, my dear!"

"Oh, God!" he exclaimed, brokenly, staring at her wildly, and suddenly dropping his arms heavily to his sides; "what have I done?"

"But, my dear," she said, again, laughing tremulously, her eyes bright with tears, "you haven't done anything. I'm so glad——"

"Oh, God!" he cried again, hoarsely, and once more his long arms were holding her, his wild eyes blazing into hers, his hot lips on hers. Then, with a cry of unendurable pain, he had flung her from him. The door opened and closed; she heard the front door slam and the sound of his steps as he went, dragging a little, down the street.

CHAPTER IX

FOR nearly a month Helen could not speak to Francis Reay. Several times she caught sight of him in the distance, but he always turned off up some side-way to avoid her; several times she saw him going into church for eight-o'clock Matins, and felt unreasonably savage with him for it. She was all the time horribly troubled about him: at one moment she took herself severely to task for letting her first love affair turn her into a love-sick schoolgirl; the next, her eyes softened with tears, and she told herself that he was ill and must be made well again. To Louis she said grimly that she would cure him of "that wretched mediæval kink," or die in the attempt; to herself, very late at night or early in the morning, in the privacy of her bedroom, she admitted that this was neither a missionary nor yet a schoolgirl affair, but the elemental love of a woman for a man she had to win—the old tale of menaced maiden and valiant male with the modern reversal.

One day at the hospital she was sitting on the verandah, waiting for Louis. A copy of *Home Notes* was on the bricks; she took it up lazily, and glanced through it. Louis sat down with his inevitable off-duty cigarette and asked how Martin's Street was looking. Then, before she had time to answer, he went on to tell about his new laboratory in the patients' school.

"Old Carnelly takes to elementary inorganic chemistry like a duckling takes to water," he said, with a laugh. "It wasn't taught at school in his day. To see his face when he gets hold of a piece of litmus paper! He thinks he's Maskelyne and Cook in one! And he's a fair devil with zinc and sulphuric. I got him a toy balloon and let him make hydrogen to inflate it the other day——"

He broke off suddenly and looked at her closely. The wind in the pines sounded softly.

"If you'd really *rather* read *Home Notes*—well, of course! What *is* interesting you so much?"

She held up a page of crochet instructions.

"Looks like *Materia Medica*. What's it for?"

"I'm reading how to make a camisole top. Louis, I do wish I was the sort of woman who made camisole tops! Mustn't it be a peaceful sort of thing to be?"

She threw down the paper and sat back, sighing.

"Now what is the matter, really, old girl?" he said.

"Have you seen Francis lately?"

"Depends on when lately means. This week?"

"I haven't seen him for a month, and I'm fearfully miserable about him."

"Quarrelled?"

She flushed hotly. "No—worse! I've made love to him."

"The devil you did!" gasped Louis.

"He went off in a dreadful way," she stammered.

"But I'm all at sea, Helen. You making love! It's cataclysmic!"

"I don't see it! Why on earth shouldn't I make love? I know he wants to marry me." Her face was still flushed, but she met his eyes squarely. "But this confounded kink of his stops him doing anything so sane and ordinary."

"But he isn't a Catholic? He isn't forbidden to marry?"

"Of course he isn't. Look at the Rector! A pew full of children and that great fat wife! No, it isn't that—it's simply that he's stepped out of the *Little Flowers of St. Francis* and he's still rubbing his eyes and wondering how he got here. One day he looked at me and said to himself: 'Whosoever looketh upon a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart!' and then he vanished into someone's back yard and I didn't see him again for a week. He thinks that for him to do anything that Christ didn't do is sacrilege."

"What a scientist he'd make!" said Louis. "Self-discipline

like that! If only he could use the energy of it outside himself instead of as a sort of boomerang——”

There was a short silence while Helen turned over in her mind what to say next, out of all her thronging thoughts.

“You know, this personal love of his for Christ seems to me to come perilously near to an obsession. It’s uncanny—I feel as if I am fighting Christ for possession of him—and I’m not, in the least. It’s only *he* that makes the two loves clash—if only I could do something to show him that they don’t! It’s so morbid.”

“Of course it’s morbid! The whole thing’s morbid! Crucifixes in church—vicarious suffering—all morbid; they’re a set of misunderstandings that have to be got out of humanity as soon as possible.”

“You think it is a complex, with Francis?”

“I do.”

“Then I’m going to cure it,” she said, and looked grimly determined.

“You’ve talked to him a lot about it?”

“Talked! Can you imagine me *not* talking? Course I’ve talked—and it isn’t a bit of use; he’s impenetrable. One’s rules of psychology fail in a case like this; he’s beyond rules.”

“Yes. I say, Helen,” he said, suddenly, “I’d give it up if I were you.”

She jerked herself impatiently.

“Oh, Louis, you are trying at times! You sit there so calm and collected, and coolly say give it up! As if anyone can!”

“Of course I know it’s damnably hard. But I tell you, you’re up against something you don’t quite realize here. You’re the sort to declare war without ammunition or anything—you couldn’t be careful or discreet for worlds, old girl.”

“No, thank Heaven, I couldn’t,” she said, hotly.

“Well, you’re braver than I am. Give me an alcoholic, or almost any sort of mental patient rather than one bitten with religion. It’s the one thing nothing can kill or cure, until it goes right out of the universal consciousness entirely.

They say, 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' and simply hug delusion and martyrdom."

Her voice broke as she said, tremulously:

"What *am* I going to do with him, then? Oh, you don't know—he's so fine! I can't bear to see him like this. He was terrible the last day I saw him—strained to breaking-point. I felt I wanted to put him to bed and make him sleep. I had to make him kiss me! Why, Christ would never be silly enough to demand that sort of sacrifice from His servants."

"Course He wouldn't. He'd realize how it impaired their usefulness in the world. But Christ is what centuries of superstition have made Him. 'I the Lord thy God am a jealous God,' is firmly implanted in religious people's minds, and poor old Reay has got it badly."

They sat staring out into the gathering darkness, while lights sprang up from the hospital buildings all round them. Suddenly, Helen stood up.

"Coming down to my Bath-house next Thursday, Louis? It's nearly ready. The workpeople have got it through in record time. To please Francis—and to give it a slightly symbolic significance in his mind—I've called it Bethesda."

"Bethesda?" he said, frowning reminiscently.

"You know—the pool where the angel used to come and trouble the waters to heal people, a sort of Aix or Vichy with the auto-suggestion of Lourdes added. I don't know that my Bethesda is going to do much healing; but it'll make people clean."

"Yes, of course I'll come. I suppose Reay will be there?"

"I'm writing to ask him; it would be horrid if he kept away. By the bye, you haven't a stray pianola to give away, have you?" She explained how she had wanted to turn the Mission into a jazz-hall in the evenings, but failing to make Francis see the desirability of it, had decided to have dancing in the big room at Bethesda if people wanted it. She was delighted when Louis said he would write and ask his mother if she wouldn't like to buy her a good gramophone and a few dozen dance records.

When she left, Louis sat for half an hour thinking about her and wondering what he could do for her and Reay.

Jacqueline opened the door in response to Helen's ring. Maud had shown many patients into the waiting-room and had gone away to her Christian Endeavour meeting. On a hard oak chair in the hall sat a bedraggled woman dressed in a frowsy black mantle covered with fractured jet sequins. Her dirty condition was unpleasantly apparent as soon as Helen came inside the door. The woman herself must have been aware of it, for on the small table beside her was a small bottle of cheap, pungent scent. She had been drinking to fortify herself against the interview. Helen recognized her as Mrs. Derry who used to live at number one, Martin's Street.

As she saw the doctor, she began to sniffle. From the dining-room came the tap-tap-tap of Jacqueline's typewriter, and her thin grasshopper song.

"Who told you to sit out here?" asked Helen as she put down a sheaf of papers on the hall table. "You're Mrs. Derry, aren't you?"

"Your servant put me down here, and went off. I'm not good enough for the likes of her to cohabit with."

"I'm sorry she did that, Mrs. Derry. She's a new maid, and hasn't quite learnt the ways of a doctor's house yet. Will you come into my room?"

"Lot more people wait for you, Madame!" said Jacqueline, opening the dining-room door again. "Mod say to me, she go in her church. She are in bad temper. When you ring your bell, I voule tell patients."

"Thank you, Jacqueline," said Helen, smiling at her.

Mrs. Derry sat down panting; her double chins shook, pink and flabby, like dewlaps. Her nose and forehead were red and polished; two great ostrich feathers, one black, the other pink, in her hat, swept down over her face, hiding one eye entirely. Underneath her rusty mantle a purple satin skirt peeped out; on the grey suède shoes she was wearing, a size too small for comfort, and burst at the sides, were two

gay paste buckles. As Helen sat down in her chair at the other side of her desk, Mrs. Derry began to cry.

"Come, Mrs. Derry—what's the matter?" asked Helen. But the woman continued her copious weeping. Helen, with mental pictures before her of Mrs. Willis, Mrs. Derry and several other women of Lower Shellpit, began to think out a paper on fatty degeneration.

"I can't do anything for you unless you tell me what is the matter," suggested Helen.

Out of the snuffling and sobbing, words detached themselves.

"Out of 'ouse an' 'ome—bread out o' folks's mouths——"

"Oh, you're not ill at all? You've come to quarrel with me about Martin's Street?" The words were snapped out sharply.

The woman looked up, her eyes malevolent and cunning.

"It's your fault—Mr. Waldron said it was. And how do you think I'm to manage——"

"You are living in another house, Mrs. Derry. What has your house to do with getting your living? You have three men and three girls there to work for you," said Helen, purposely misunderstanding the woman.

But she was not going to be misunderstood.

"Look 'ere, Miss Blooming Sauce!" she cried, fiercely; "don't yo' get coming it over me! Yo' know as well as I do as we canna get a livin' anyway, 'cept as 'ow we got it i' Martin's Street. Everybody knows us—the 'ouse where we're livin' is next door a blasted chapel steward, and the landlord acrost the road. If you so much as look cross-eyed, you get kicked out, or in the police court."

"You were always getting in the police court before," said Helen, quickly.

"Maybe—but i' this 'ouse we shanna get a chanct at nothin'. People as know us go down to Martin's Street—and w'at do they find? A blooming church stunt! 'Ow am I goin' to live? Seven grown-ups, and five children for feed and clothe."

"How do other people live? Why, you ought to be one of the richest families in the district, with six people to work for you!"

Mrs. Derry wept her facile tears into the scented handkerchief.

"If you was to see them girls o' mine, you'd think better than talk about work, doctor. Lazy, idle madams, they are! Too idle to keep theirselves clean! All the chaps are good for is to lay i' bed day an' night, on'y gettin' up if they thinks things is bad an' the girls want eggins on wi' a few back-handers!"

"And you come here and expect me to have sympathy with you because you've brought your girls up like that? Why, Mrs. Derry, I tell you quite frankly I'd put the whole lot of you in prison if I could. I can't imagine how you've escaped it."

Instead of the outburst of rage she had expected, Mrs. Derry cried all the more noisily.

"It's 'ard, Dr. Clevion. I've bin i' gaol four times, in all. It's always me as cops out and the others get off scot-free. They're that artful! But it's always Mother 'as to bear the brunt of everything! First hoss i' the morning, last hoss at night—that's me! And if we get down to low water Bill and Bob carries on scan'lous—scan'lous they do. They daresent 'it the girls, but they laps into me something cruel!"

"But why ever do you stand it, you silly woman?"

"You can't go back on your own flesh an' blood—I've took to seven kids for 'em—w'at they couldna get into the Union."

Helen stared at her and, underneath all the horror for which she stood, saw something that seemed not horrible at all.

"Our Bill thought the parson was at the bottom of it, an' he dotted 'im one last week. It was me as 'ad for fatch 'im in an' doctor 'im when 'e come over faint. But I knew as it wasna Master Reay as done it. He isna one for turn folkses out. Give me a quid he did, an' all, and 'im that poor himself, wi' 'is shoes right through on the ground."

Helen was staring at her. At last she managed to dam the spate of eloquence.

"Was Mr. Reay badly hurt?" she asked, sharply.

"Well, not considering it were our Bill as clocked him!" she answered, proudly. "He laid on my sofie, an' said fatch the doctor from the 'Sylum. Paid for a taxi, 'e did, for our

Flo for fatch him! Then they went off together, 'im and the doctor."

"Oh!" Helen realized that she must forget personal interests for a while; she felt sick that he had been hurt for her; she wanted to run right out of the house and kidnap him at once, but she managed to sit still, her foot tapping impatiently. Looking at Mrs. Derry, she asked quietly, almost in a friendly tone:

"And aren't you tired of all this? Wouldn't you like to throw it all up, and start better?"

"'Ow can I? My time o' life—an' all them children?" she snuffled.

"But that's just it! You can't bring up children in that sort of life! They'll have to be sent away out of it—seeing idle people drinking and bullying and fighting as they do, and living by immorality! Why, they'll be like it themselves some day! Mrs. Derry, you come away out of it. If you didn't protect and care for those girls of yours their men would have to work for them. Listen to me—you're tired, aren't you?"

"Tired? I cud lay down an' die, many a night."

"Well then—I'll pay for you to have a holiday if you'll go into the country for a month and leave them to manage without you. Then I'm sure I can find you some work when you feel fit to do it. You're an old woman, and to help those young folks to a life of immorality is the work of a devil! But I don't believe you mean it——"

She broke off suddenly, for Mrs. Derry, her eyes flaming and her face shaking, had started to her feet and was shaking her fist at her, trembling and inarticulate with rage.

"Work! Old woman indeed! Old woman yourself! I'll tell you this, Miss Blasted Cheek, there's plenty o' fellows as come to the 'ouse after my girls as 'ud sooner 'ave Ma—even if she is a old woman! So put that in your pipe an' smoke it!"

"I didn't want to hurt you," began Helen, trembling a little.

"Well, if I was you, instead of turning folkses out of their houses and stopping them from getting a bite for put in their mouths, I'd look after my own chap and not 'ave all the old hens in the church scratting round after him!"

Before Helen could get her breath Mrs. Derry had dashed out. Helen stared at the slammed door for an instant, and then in amazement and disgust collapsed in her chair.

"I really ought to tell Ruthers about that," she said at last, "if it was the sort of thing one could repeat. It really looks as if I'm going to get my fingers burnt."

Then she got out the Sanitas spray, disinfected the room materially if not spiritually, and interviewed her patients with a sense of relief to find them merely ill and not wicked.

Jacqueline had gone into the drawing-room; by Helen's chair was a glass of iced coffee, her cigarettes and matches, and a late crimson rose in a glass. Some papers were on the under shelf of the little table. She sank with a sigh of relief into the big chair, took up *Punch*, and let her eyes rest gratefully on a great sheaf of Michaelmas daisies in the hearth.

"Meess Vembley com' bring flowers," said Jacqueline. "I mek lot t'ing for 'er—she paid me lot money."

"That's good," said Helen, her mind occupied with her conversation about Francis. She turned over the pages of *Punch* unseeingly until a phrase underneath one of the Ravenhill cartoons caught her eye. "DIRECT ACTION" she read, and did not look at the picture, but whispered it again to herself.

"Direct action——" she whispered, several times. "I think I'll try it——"

"I go in de town to-day to buy shoes, Madame. I paid you leetl' picture. Voule you, please, accept it?"

She brought out a tiny parcel wrapped in tissue-paper. Somewhat surprised, Helen unfastened it. It was a minute Japanese print—a blue sky, a shimmering water, a bird in flight and a wind-blown spray of peach-blossom.

"You know, really, Jacqueline, it's awfully nice of you to give me this," she said, very much touched. "It's exactly what I wanted to-night. To take away nasty thoughts, you know. But really—I'm not used to having things showered upon me!" She laughed a little. "My coffee and cigarettes here, and Miss Wembley's daisies, and your picture—I shall be spoiled!"

"You are vaire *gentille* for me, Madame," said Jacqueline,

softly. "When I am wit' you, I t'ink: 'Soon I come clean girl,' because I lov' you. When I go in town and look at *magasin* I t'ink I shall not com' clean girl ever. I want lot t'ing in *magasin*, and man only give money to der dirty girl. But I go no more in *magasin*—I stay all der time in your 'ouse, and be *saufe*."

"But, my dear," cried Helen, embarrassed; "it's so silly. I'm not a scrap 'gooder' than you, really, only my character is a little different. For you to be what you call clean because I am—oh, it's all so muddled up and wrong."

"When I am leetl' girl wit' nuns I am clean; when I am big girl wit' Ravigla I am dirty. Now I am wit' you I com' clean again. *Voilà!*" she said, conclusively, and Helen, started on a train of thought, was silent.

So flimsy, so insecure! Building a system of morality on a human being's stability! Building a system of divinity on a human being's divinity! Good-shepherded by vanishing pillars of fire and of cloud, exemplified by figments of dreams——

"I paid some shoes to-day, Madame," said Jacqueline, and Helen came back with a start. "T'ree pounds, bee-utiful shoe! I spend all my *monnaie* now!"

She brought the shoes across to Helen, who looked at them with forced interest, a little surprised at their expensiveness. They were grey shoes of some sort of unusual skin, with extravagantly high heels.

"I go in lot de *magasin*—all der shoes are working-class stuff, brok' my foot. I put it on, pass queeck in der room. 'Clomp, clomp, clomp,' my foot say, like der foot of der *paysan* in my home when I am leetl' girl. Dis are bee-utiful shoe." She took them up, looked at them lovingly, and added, "Voulez you pardon me, Madame," as she stepped out of her slippers, put on the grey shoes, and ran across to the mirror in the hall. On her face was the first really happy smile Helen had seen there.

"My foot look bee-utiful, *n'est-ce pas*, Madame?" she asked, and Helen weakly assented. She had caught a mental picture of Jacqueline in her long day's quest for the pretty shoes,

Jacqueline in shabby old shoes suffering shame from them, Jacqueline smiling, forgetting to grieve for her "shildrens" and her lovers because she had an expensive and futile pair of snake-skin shoes.

"Now you want a pretty new frock, Jacqueline," said Helen, as the girl sat down to survey with satisfaction the tips of her toes. "A grey frock, perhaps, like the shoes. You funny little thing, you do love pretty things, don't you?"

"Mon Dieu, 'ow I lov' it!" she cried. "I want 'ave everyt'ing bee-utiful! Vaire difficult—be clean girl and bee-utiful girl too."

"Why, my dear, if clothes make you so happy, get them!" cried Helen, laughing at her. "It seems to me that if one can add to the sum-total of human happiness in such an easy way as that, it's a pity not to. I like to see you happy, and I must certainly admit that I like to see you beautiful. So get your frock to-morrow."

"But I cannot tek more of your *monnaie*!" cried Jacqueline, her eyes shining. "You are so gentle for me already."

"Well, supposing I buy your grey frock because you are always doing such charming things for me! That won't be taking my money at all," said Helen, and they entered into a discussion of costs and materials. That night, as she undressed, Helen heard the little, faint song from Jacqueline's bedroom; Maud heard it too, as she was reading her chapter before getting into bed. She opened her door and shut it with an admonitory slam that was quite lost on Jacqueline, who was standing in front of her mirror as she had seen Ravigla stand, clad only in grey silk stockings and the grey shoes, with a little black velvet cap on her head. She danced a few silent steps on the polished floor, threw off the shoes and hat, and flung herself on the bed, her hands groping under the pillow for her rosary.

"To-day I 'ave *gris* shoes of snake. To-morrow I 'ave new costume! Oh, dis *femme savante*. 'Ow I lov' it! She are more bee-utiful dan Rex."

Her voice settled into the monotone of the rosary. As her

small fingers told the beads, praying on Helen's behalf, and her lips moved piously, her eyes, opening against her will, kept catching sight of the effect of grey silk stockings as a *robe de nuit*; and she shut her eyes tightly, because the rosary had brought back memories of the nuns.

CHAPTER X

A FEW days before the opening of Bethesda Mrs. Willis came home from prison. This was not her first time: she had already done sentences of a few days for being drunk and disorderly, for failing to pay her rates, for minor assaults and obscene language; but her sentence of six months for criminal neglect of the babies had frightened her; her conscience was sufficiently tender to make her know that she deserved much more than she had got. In prison she had been kept in comparative cleanliness, without the gross foods she liked, and without drink. By a strange coincidence a chaplain and a wardress, who both thoroughly believed in hell fire, had frightened her so much that, when she reached home, she was in an exceptionally receptive mood.

Meanwhile Amy had got work in the clay on Collington's, while Ruthers' agent had been alternately bullied and bribed by Francis Reay into putting the Willis home into something like a state of repair. The ceilings were whitened, the gaps in the walls mended, the paintwork scrubbed, and new, bright and cheerful wallpaper procured. Mrs. Wall helped Amy put things to rights. The two verminous beds were sent to be destroyed; two others arrived miraculously soon after Mr. Reay had been told about their need. Jacqueline, getting out of Helen's car to leave a parcel of curtains, saw old Mr. Willis, who smiled distortedly at her. She screamed and fled, almost throwing herself into Helen's arms.

The old, composite suit of clothes in which Mr. Willis had sat for years was sent away with the beds, and now all day he sat in the unaccustomed cleanness of the kitchen, his paralyzed hands resting on the pleasant roughness of Harris tweed that had once belonged to Miss Wembley's father; his feet were thrust into joyously embroidered slippers, and on his

rough head rested a rich-coloured old velvet smoking-cap that Miss Wembley had added to the parcel. He sat surveying himself in a broken piece of looking-glass that Amy brought in from her bedroom. He smiled at sight of the slippers and cap, as he tried to force his nerveless mouth to say something.

Usually the return of an inhabitant of Lower Shellpit from gaol meant celebrations; Mrs. Willis found this rule broken now. During her absence her great friend Mrs. Wall had had a sick child cured by Dr. Clevion; it had been sent to the country by Francis Reay and, in consequence, Mrs. Wall was on her best behaviour for their sakes. To add to this, the storm centre of things had shifted to the Derrys, who held indignation meetings in a little tumbledown public-house parlour every night to think out some catastrophic but, to them, safe way of getting their own back on the doctor and the priest. So a sobered Mrs. Willis came to a transformed home.

On the day of the opening, Francis came to see the Willis family. Amy had gone to work; Mrs. Willis had not yet lost her prison habits of orderliness, and the house was quite clean. She herself was a thing of beauty in the dress Miss Wembley had sent to accompany the suit.

"I've gotter finder job, Master Reay," she told him, after she had recited her gaol experiences unblushingly. "I havena the babies now, and I dunna want for go back on th' coke yard agen—I'm too stout. It tells on me back."

"Now I wonder what we could find for you?" he said, thoughtfully.

The kettle boiled over, and Mrs. Willis made tea, pouring out a cupful of it, strong stuff with sugar and no milk, for Francis. That was the moment that Helen chose to visit poor old Willis, for whom she could not do very much, as she well knew. She had, for the moment, forgotten that Mrs. Willis would be back, and, with a tap at the door, opened it and walked in. It took her an instant to see Mrs. Willis and her patient, another to see Francis, and another to recover from the shock of her first face-to-face meeting with him since his flight from her. Then she nodded and smiled to him, spoke to Mrs. Willis and the old man, and sat down.

"We were just talking over getting something for Mrs. Willis to do," said Francis, in a voice that was a little unnatural.

Helen looked at her, noted her cleanness, her regenerate thinness, and said:

"How would you like to work for me, Mrs. Willis? In the café part of the Bath-house, you know. I want someone to wash up the cups and help to keep it clean. Mrs. Winnocks is coming to-day, but I haven't got anything in the way of a staff till I see if people are going to flock."

So it was arranged that Mrs. Willis should go to the Bath-house that afternoon.

Helen and Francis left the house together. It seemed possible that he might vanish into another house, so, outside the door she turned to him calmly, while the ducks quacked in the mud at their feet.

"Why did you keep away from me all this time, Francis?" she asked; "wasn't it rather unkind?"

"Doctor—I can't forgive myself," he began.

"And wasn't it rather silly to go to Louis Farne to get your face stitched up? Considering I'm his staff surgeon—I—I may not be very good at making love, but I have no doubts whatever about my surgical skill."

His eyes were dilated, his face duskily flushed, as he looked away from her helplessly.

"It was unpardonable, that night at your house. I have been struggling——"

"It wasn't unpardonable one bit! It's the last month that's been unpardonable."

Where the dust and garbage joined the pool of mud, the grizzled fowls scratched at their feet. In the distance across the shawdruck the Nasmyth hammer thudded, and there was the sound of strange, titanic machinery from a dozen directions. From the Jug and Bottle entrance of a public-house on the corner a little girl came with a screw-stoppered bottle of beer, which she unfastened and tasted with exhilarating terror. As she caught sight of the two absorbed people who were so much against little girls stealing their mother's beer, she flew down the street. But they had not seen her. A woman lower

down the road looked out of her door for an instant and went inside to hide a satisfying meal of tripe and onions under the bed, so that, if the priest called, she could weep to him about her hungry children and get a free meal.

"Oh, God," he said, "you make it harder."

"My dear, I don't! Or, rather, yes I do—and I mean to! I want to make it impossible! I love you, Francis, and you love me. Why hide it?"

"No, no," he broke in. "Oh, God, don't tempt me! You must know what I feel about this, Helen."

The woman down the street, having safely hidden her meal, and burnt brown paper to take away its smell, looked out again; she was impatient for the curtain to ring down on Helen's act, and ring up on hers.

"Francis," said Helen, calmly, as though she were talking about a case, "I think you are hopelessly wrong. I am much too sane ever to think either of us can live happily and usefully nursing an unfulfilled desire, fighting ourselves."

His eyes were tragic, full of agony, but just as full of fierce determination.

"Fighting, Helen? 'His blood-red banner streams afar! Who follows in His train?' Of course we have to fight!"

"Fight all this if you like," she said, softly, waving her hand about Lower Shellpit, "but don't fight me! I'm not wicked—I'm your ally! I'm not—not a Delilah!" She laughed a little brokenly. "Francis, I'm so glad to love you; you must know that. But, oh, my dear, it isn't enough for me! I want to be with you—I want—oh, all the things I never imagined I'd be idiot enough to want! It's a frightful *descensus* for me, you know. I was so completely self-sufficient till you did this to me!"

"What can I say?" he murmured. "It is so hard, so cruel for us both."

"Yes—but only because you make it so. You're blinded! You prayed for light that night at my house. I tell you, my dear, light is here if only you'll look at it."

Mrs. Willis peeped through the window at them; the woman down the street decided to make the best of a bad job, and

eat her tripe and onions before they became congealed with cold.

He stood looking at her, his face drawn with pain, the plastered scar strangely incongruous. She watched him, her eyes overflowing.

"The martyr first whose eagle eye could pierce beyond the grave," he murmured.

She shook her head sadly.

"Come and talk to me to-night," she said.

"No, I daren't," he told her, and then, quickly: "Yes, I'll come."

He turned away, limping a little. He had not noticed that his shoes were in such a state of disrepair until, walking over the broken pitchers of the shawdruck, he had felt them piercing his feet. He was only dimly conscious of the discomfort. The next moment he had turned back again—she was still watching him, smiling a little.

"If only I didn't love you," he said indignantly, devouring her face.

"If I thought you didn't love me, can you imagine me standing in the middle of a garbage-strewn slum street, going down on my knees to get you to marry me, you silly old idiot? And you know you're going to, in the end."

He went on his way, trembling with the agony of his thoughts. She walked along Sharlock Street to her next patient, who lived in an incongruous, incredible little house a few yards back from the pavement, the only house in the district with a patch of garden.

She went on her way through the streets where, even in the afternoon when the public-houses were closed and most of the men at work, she could hear fierce bickering going on among those who were "resting" before the night shift at the unresting collieries and forges, or ovens of the factories—"resting" in hovels that swarmed with children the moment school was over, queened over by neurotic, foul-mouthed, short-tempered, slatternly women, and festooned with washing that could not be put out to dry in the smoky air. The places were without privacy or decency or comfort of any sort. She had

believed, in her hospital days, that science could cure every disease, whether of mind, body or estate. Now she was beginning to doubt.

"No, no—it's heresy and cowardice to say that things are hopeless," she told herself fiercely. "While you're spouting about hopelessness, the fire goes out!"

Numbers one and three, Martin's Street, were three-storey buildings with two large rooms and a kitchen on the ground floor, and three bedrooms on each landing. The door of number three had been fastened permanently and the wall between the two halls partly removed, making a wide entrance hall; broken tiles had been replaced; the floor was quite passably good after generations of filth had been scraped from it. In the kitchen of number three a woman, whose wages were guaranteed by Miss Wembley, made tea or coffee and kept a great copper-full of soup ready for use. She cut up bread-and-butter, made toast and had announced her intention of making cakes in the mornings before the business of the day began. The tea was to be sold at a penny or a halfpenny a cup, according to size, and two slices of bread-and-butter were to cost a penny. The two sitting-rooms of number three were like the communicating rooms separated by folding doors often seen in London suburban houses. These rooms, distempered a warm cream colour, with blue curtains at the windows and russet curtains at the doorways, contained some dozen wooden tables covered with willow-patterned oilcloth. Helen had hesitated long at the oilcloth, until she was convinced that clean oilcloth was better than smudged linen; the money saved on laundry could be spent on a few extra currants in the cakes. There were chairs big and little, old and new, begged, borrowed and bought; there were bright plants sent from the hospital greenhouses, chrysanthemums and chillies, and big bunches of Cape gooseberries and honesty bought because they would last a long time. Helen had very little hope for the plants, but had arranged to change them often for new ones while the tired ones went back to hospital.

Into this room people—women especially, for she was afraid the men would fight shy at first—could come in the midst of

housework or shopping, to rest quietly for a few minutes and drink a cup of tea without the trouble of preparing it and washing the cup and teapot afterwards.

Louis and Francis were there when Helen came in. Miss Wembley was already at work, her cheeks a little pink from her exertions as she put plates of cakes and bread-and-butter on the serving-counter in the sitting-room. By the window was a very pretty girl of something under thirty who looked anxiously at Helen as she went across to speak to Miss Wembley.

"I've arranged for Mrs. Willis to do the washing up. I do hope she won't get drunk. She looks no end of a great lady in the frock you sent her, and is going about exuding virtue and good intentions at every pore."

"Poor dear!" said Miss Wembley, gently.

"How do you think it looks? Oh, that adorable little chilli! Isn't it just exactly right on that table in the corner? Really, Louis, you're a frightfully nice sort of man, sending me these plants. How do you think it's going to do?"

"My dear, it's wonderful, and it's going to do wonders," said Miss Wembley, her soft brown eyes full of devotion as she looked at Helen. "Have you taken a last look into the parlour?"

"No, I'm going to take Mr. Reay and the doctor in, in a minute. Who's the pretty girl?" she added, turning again to glance at the girl in the window.

"Oh, didn't you get my letter?"

"No, I never get letters now before I come out—they all arrive by the second post."

"Oh—well, she's Mrs. Schlegel."

"German?"

"No. At least, only by marriage. She was married to a German waiter before the war. She has shown me his photo—a terrible young man; every hair drilled! The typical German young man who thinks himself the salt of the earth."

Helen nodded.

"They had one boy. When war broke out Schlegel got his mobilization papers, and went home to Leipsic. He went

through the war and has written to her several times saying that she can go to—go quite to the bad, my dear, if she wishes. Apparently, she was rather weak and foolish. You see, poor little soul, she was very poor.” Miss Wembley faltered and blushed and looked embarrassed. “I don’t think she’s clever, and I’m afraid her health is not at all robust.”

“You mean, there’s a baby, I suppose?” asked Helen, bluntly.

Miss Wembley nodded, looking at her deprecatingly and almost as if acknowledging responsibility.

“Yes, the little one is six months old. I have—er—seen that he is adequately cared for lately. A woman out on the moors beyond the hospital has taken charge of him, and the Society of Friends have the little German boy, who is delicate. I thought perhaps she would do as waitress here.” She broke off tentatively, and added: “Won’t she? It is so hard for her to find work. She was employed as packer in the Eagle Laundry, but when the girls found out that she was married to a German, they were very unkind, and—I think they made remarks about her child.”

Helen darted a glance at Mrs. Schlegel, who looked like a Botticelli Madonna in a threadbare, navy serge coat and skirt.

“A bit risky, Miss Wembley. She’s awfully pretty—and without her child—her anchors have dragged, haven’t they?”

“But what can she do? No home and no means of earning a living if she has to look after her little ones!”

The room began to fill up; friends of Miss Wembley, friends and patients of Helen from Upper Shellpit came first, and many of the people of Sharlock Street and Martin’s Street and Ruthers’ Row followed, a mixture of shyness and defiance. Some came out of sheer curiosity, others because they had heard there was to be a free meal. There was no formal opening ceremony: Helen spoke to those she knew, Francis and Miss Wembley to others, and Louis to those he recognized as relatives of his patients at the hospital. Some of them sat down at the tables a little awkwardly, but, under the influence of cups of tea, thawed and chattered cheerfully. Mrs. Schlegel, after watching for five minutes, ran along the road and came back with an apron; when next Helen noticed her, she was

busy carrying round the cups of tea that Mrs. Winnocks made but would not bring into the room because of the remarks she felt sure people made about her face.

Helen led Francis and Louis across the entrance hall into the parlour—the two big rooms belonging to number one. This was coloured a soft shell pink and there were three reproductions of modern pictures on the walls—two of riotous Surrey flower-gardens, and one a scene in an Algerian town, full of movement and sunlight and colour. There were some dozen big Oxford chairs with brightly coloured futurist chintzes, whose covers were washable; there was a gas fire in each room; piles of magazines, women's papers and novelettes lay on a shelf. The floor was covered with polished linoleum, with two washable wool rugs.

"There, now—how do you like it?" asked Helen, anxiously. "They don't have to pay to come into my parlour; I want them to drop in for half an hour sometimes, these poor things who have no place to be alone in for a minute! Fewer neurotics for you, Louis, if they do!"

"It's a great idea. A sort of withdrawing-room!" said Louis.

Then she led them upstairs. It was bare, for she had found that her thousand pounds had not gone very far in constructing the tumbledown old houses. She had kept her odd two hundred pounds to pay for upkeep until the place should pay for itself, though she had profound faith that it would not fail for want of money.

"Here's the nursery," she said, with the air of a showman; "it's a sort of crèche, you see, but the children can't stay here all day—yet. That will come in time when I have more room and more money, and"—she added, with a sly glance at Francis—"if the Lord wills!"

She looked almost girlish as she showed them her nursery with its cork-linoed floor, half-dozen little cots, two little horse-shoe tables and its rather heterogeneous collection of toys that Miss Wembley's exertions had collected from the rich people about Brompton Avenue.

By degrees the women came trickling upstairs, looking at

everything, criticizing freely, asking for explanations. They had come feeling a little suspicious. They thought Helen was going to make something out of them. When they realized that she could not possibly be making anything at all, the acquisitive ones were satisfied and decided to make something themselves: when they realized that they had to pay, and that there was no question of charity, the poor and proud ones were equally satisfied. They liked the shining cleanness of the enamelled baths, twelve of them in little cubicles, with a chair and a mirror and a row of pegs in each cubicle. Louis caught sight of packets of bath crystals on a shelf in the store-room.

"Lord, you aren't going to provide bath crystals as well?" he said, looking at her reprovingly. "On tuppence a bath?"

"I believe it's a piece of utter absurdity," she said, flushing as she pushed the tablets of soap in front of the little packages, to hide them; "but it's only for the first few weeks."

Miss Wembley brought along the Rector just then. He had come in, pontifical and full of curiosity, ready to bestow his blessing if he could find anything to bless. Helen heard his Oxford voice, kindly, softly intoned, mingling with the Yorkshire of her friend, the editor, as they talked. She and Francis became separated from the rest.

"I'd never have had the courage to attempt a thing like this," he said, his eyes burning when he looked at her.

"You built the Mission——" she began.

"Yes, but that's such an obvious thing to do. This is such an everyday, common-sense sort of thing that it hasn't seemed worth while to anyone before. You're a pioneer sort of person, you know."

"Do you really think so?" she asked, feeling ridiculously pleased with his praise.

"Like John the Baptist!" he told her, in a whisper. "You're going to baptize them with water! I want—to bring them the baptism of the Holy Ghost, and of fire——"

She saw the dream creeping round him again, as his eyes grew clouded, his arms slack.

"You'll have a much better chance when they're clean, won't you?" she asked, briskly.

The Rector's voice, clear and bell-like, broke in, and Francis turned away a little.

"I see you've called this place Bethesda, doctor," the Rector said. "Er—ah—or—are you going to have nonconformist or—any sectarian bias in your control of it? It sounds nonconformist—many of the local dissenting places of worship are called Bethesda."

"Oh no, Mr. Tappan, I hadn't thought of that," she answered, quickly. "It's neither Anglican nor nonconformist. It's merely historical."

"Quite, quite, quite! Then—er—ah—or—the whole thing is entirely secular?" he inquired, looking at her over his glasses.

"Entirely! Isn't *your* bathroom?" she asked, gently.

The Rector looked surprised, and Helen, hearing a smothered explosion of laughter from Louis and the editor, hoped she had not been unkind to the old gentleman, who certainly meant well.

Her voice was drowned by the Rector's. She turned to Francis again. The dream was still in his eyes. He seemed almost oblivious of her.

"Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain," he was murmuring to himself.

"Well, be cheerful about it!" she said, with a laugh, and suddenly, serious, added: "Don't you think the Lord *is* building this, Francis?"

He made no answer. She waited an instant.

"By the way, Francis, are you coming to Sharlock Street, or home with me for a chat? If you come home you'll have to talk to Jacqueline; she's a darling little thing, and has the art of effacing herself for a while when she's conscious of being in the way. I've never met such a model of tact."

"How long is she staying?" he asked with forced interest, as the clouds of his dream dissolved.

"I don't know in the least. I hope she'll be contented to

stay for a long time. We're great friends, and I don't like being alone."

"I hate your being friends with a girl like that," he said, with sudden heat; "think of her life, and the things she has done!"

"Think of your life, and my life, and the things we have done—and the things we haven't done!" she said, mimicking his tone.

He flushed a little, and looked hurt.

"It's bad for you—it must be," he went on. "There, I'm preaching now! You're always preaching to me. Everyone you know is weak or ill or wicked; everyone you know, either professionally or socially, takes from you all the time—money, or service, or friendship or something. No one ever gives to you. And you can't see it. You can't see that they all cling to you for help, and you treat them all as friends and equals."

The crowd had gone. In the corner of the room Louis and the editor were deep in talk. Helen looked at them, and back at Francis.

"I'm asking you to give to me every time I see you lately, and you won't," she said. He turned to the darkening window. She looked at him, bit her lip, told herself something militant about "direct action," and decided to change the subject.

"I wonder if it occurred to you then, that you made a horribly snobbish remark—for a servant of Christ?" she asked, in a conversational tone which so surprised him that he turned round quickly.

"Did I?" he said, startled.

"You certainly did. In my recent researches into the character and history of Christ—undertaken to please you, I must admit—I came across something perfectly splendid."

"What was that?"

"Why, I found He was a staunch democrat. I've come to see Him as much more humanity's friend than its Saviour. And after all, isn't a friend a saviour, very often—a saviour from oneself?"

He looked at her and smiled. "Helen, you want a friend," he said to himself.

"I mean—wasn't it more sensible to say of Christ, 'This man receiveth sinners and eateth with them,' than to say, 'This man died for sinners'?" she went on. "Isn't it better to be a friend to someone you want to do things for, than to go making all sorts of spectacular sacrifices for them?"

"He died that they might be washed in His blood, and cleansed from their sins," he cried, his face alight.

"It's as clear as daylight to me that if you or I or anyone did a thing so rebellious as Christ did we should, metaphorically, be put to death! Making friends with sinners! Forgiving sinners without any of the vengeful stoning ordained by social law! Isn't that enough to hound anyone to death, even to-day? You see, you—the gentlest sort of Christian I have ever known—think it's wrong for little Jacqueline to be with me——" She turned hurriedly as Mrs. Winnocks came into the room. "Yes? Do you want me?"

"A message for you, ma'am, from home. Mr. Crane at Hill Crest is seriously ill."

Helen turned to Francis abruptly.

"I must go, then. He suffers from heart attacks. Will you come?"

He nodded without speaking.

"I must go to Sharlock Street for some drugs, and then we'll call at the garage for the car."

She called good-bye to the others and hurried over to Sharlock Street. It took her two minutes to wash, find her motor-gloves, add some phials of amyl nitrate to the things in her bag, and join Francis in the street.

"Don't drop it, for heaven's sake," she said, doubtfully, as he held out his hand for the bag. He gripped it like a life-buoy and they tore along at a rate that made speech impossible. When they reached the garage, the night watchman was missing, and Helen's car jammed behind two others. Her eyes were sparkling with annoyance, her cheeks a little flushed, when she discovered that the car had not been cleaned and that the petrol tank was empty. There was a good quarter of an hour's delay before they were finally going through the

thronged and lighted streets out towards the outskirts of the town where, two miles away, was Hill Crest.

"I'll raise diversions here to-morrow," said Helen, grimly, at last. "I particularly ordered that my car was to be put where I could get at it by myself without an instant's delay—that's the worst of not having your own garage! This arrangement suits me very well when they behave themselves—but—well, they'll be sorry to-morrow! It might mean the loss of a life while I'm footling about with a confounded car!"

Reay murmured something, she could not hear what. As they passed the façade of a brilliantly lighted draper's shop, she noticed his white face and drawn mouth: she guessed that he was teased by and suffering from her close proximity. His elbows touched hers in the darkness.

"I'm glad we're alone like this, Francis. We seem so much more alone here in the dark than in a room, don't we?"

"I'm afraid of being alone with you," he said, hoarsely. "It makes me think mad, foolish things."

"Are they so very mad?" she asked, catching her teeth together quickly as she took a sharp turn uncalculatingly, with half an inch to spare.

"Mad? Yes. I feel I want to go over the edge of life with you—leave everything——"

"But how silly of you! I haven't the slightest wish to go over the edge of life with you, my dear. What I particularly want to do is to live with you sanely and work with you beside me. I certainly would not allow you to go about with holes in your boots: and I'd make you go to bed instead of praying in a cold church half the night. Moreover, I'd see that you put away vast quantities of such unspiritual things as beef and butter and cream. But, you know, you and I are not the sort of people to fall in love, get married and live happily ever afterwards! We fall in love—yes."

"I can't imagine why you should care for a man like me!" he cried.

"Probably it's because you're so confoundedly hard to acquire!" she told him. Then, shaking her head, she added softly: "No, it isn't that only. You know what it is well

enough! We're a lonely pair, Francis; we both need someone to be passionately interested in us, to be kind to our moods, to comfort our failures, and to rub us down the right way when we've been arching our backs and spitting out. But we'd not make an orgy of being in love. Oh dear, no! We're much too busy for that. We'd still go about our lawful occasions, wouldn't we?"

She turned her diagnostic eye upon him, to see how he was taking it, and added:

"And just think how badly I need someone to talk to. Reckon up how much I let burst out every time I see you—and then think of me having only a little French girl, whose English is about as good as my French, and a servant who thoroughly disapproves of me, to live with. You know, I really need a husband who'd *have* to be patient however much I talked, don't I?"

"You tempt me," he whispered. "You make your way sound so sane, so everyday; you make me feel that I am extraordinary, fantastic. I feel like a man who suddenly discovers he is wearing green trousers and a scarlet waistcoat at a funeral."

"Good!" she said, her eyes narrowing a little. "That's just what I hoped you'd feel. Then if I can make you feel you've got a yellow coat, magenta eyebrows and a green nose, perhaps you'll go and procure a marriage licence to-morrow? I often feel so sorry for people like you. You seem to think a gospel can't be preached without hair shirts, dried peas in your boots, crosses and blazing faggots—but really, the way of salvation is a sane, comfortable sort of way."

"The Church was cemented by the blood of the martyrs," he cried, clutching at the thought.

"Well—perhaps! And they're very fine and splendid. But they were not fine and splendid because they were martyrs, my dear. They were martyrs because they were fine and splendid! Isn't that so? Like Christ?"

"I hadn't thought of that before," he murmured.

She sprang out of the car, snatched off her gloves and threw them on to the seat, took up her bag, said, "I shall probably

be twenty minutes—you'll have time to come up to the surface and breathe," and vanished, leaving him in a turmoil.

He sat back, cowering in the car, glad of the darkness. Every moment with Helen made his struggle against her harder; her sanity was so convincing, her arguments so simple, so graspable that he felt he was being persuaded against his will. But it was not really against his will at all. All his will, all his being, fought side by side with her; being near her had set his heart thumping, had dried his lips until it was almost impossible to speak to her. The very strength of his desire increased his courage to fight it; it seemed to him that this was the old, old fight of flesh and spirit, the old, old fight of the forty days in the wilderness—a cruel fight, since his enemy was beloved of him and could not be crushed as brave men crush their enemies. He knew that Helen was on the side of the angels; he knew, blindly, instinctively, that he had to fight her because she meant happiness to him, and happiness was not for him, the servant of the Man of Sorrows. This was the trial of his faith; this sacrifice of his happiness was frankincense and myrrh to lay at the feet of his Lord. . . .

So he decided, and so he believed, and it seemed to him, visioning the lonely, gentle Man of Sorrows going about the hills of Galilee and the streets of Jerusalem, that there was a kinship between Master and disciple.

"Then said I, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God! My lips touched with the live coal from Thy altar! How could they speak words of love, know kisses of love?" he whispered, and lost his body in a floating ecstasy of devotion.

So he mused, arming himself against humanity, hugging a spurious divinity. Helen came out through the shadowed garden of Hill Crest, walking in a path of light cast by the open door. In his absorption he had not noticed the passing of time.

"How quick you've been!" he said, as she drew on her gloves.

"Have I? Half an hour! That means you wanted me to be a long time. Mr. Crane is better. But he won't have many more attacks like that!"

She deposited her bag under the seat, started the engine, and sprang in quickly.

"Are you in a hurry to get home?"

He looked at her helplessly, unable to speak.

"If not, we'll run round by Brinden's Ford. It's still to-night, and there's a heavenly smell of September in the air. Can't you smell it? In Shellpit we can't smell anything but smoke and people. Listen! No, sniff. Marigolds!"

Her hat was slipping down over one eye; the urgent breeze was under it, and she was wishing she had not forgotten her veil. With a little impatient movement she wrenched the hat off and dropped it at Francis's feet.

"Don't tread on it, will you? It's my best. I do hate hats. Can you imagine what it would be like to have hair like mine, the straight sort of hair that won't bite a hatpin, to lose one hatpin at that, and to go through the air at forty miles an hour with your hat hanging on to one pin that tugs violently at your scalp all the time?"

"I like you without your hat," he said, with a sigh.

"Well, cheer up about it!" she said, turning to smile at him. "Oh, you poor dear, you do look tired. I ought to take you home to your bed!"

"I can't sleep lately—and when I do, I dream," he murmured.

"More of the love story?" she asked, casually, her heart giving a sudden leap of nervousness.

"I dreamed last night—awful dreams—and wakened calling to you to save me."

"What was it?" she said, keeping her voice under fierce control. "Kingdoms? Joseph dreamed of a kingdom before he'd ever been in the land of captivity."

"I went to bed awfully tired last night. I'd—what's the use of hiding it?—been thinking of you, and walking past your house, after you had gone to bed, fighting the thought."

He broke off, passing his hand wearily over his eyes.

"I went to bed, after I'd seen you put your light out, and dropped off to sleep at once. I always do that nowadays—go to sleep as if I'd been poleaxed, when I do finally get to

sleep at all. Then it seemed as if the wall of my bedroom opposite the bed vanished—you know how these things happen in dreams! And a grove of young trees was there. But I don't know what sort of trees they were—they were just inexpressibly beautiful, with long, pointed, shining leaves. I remember giving a sigh of delight at their greenness and freshness after all this grime. And then they started to move towards me. The whole grove of them! I couldn't move—I seemed to be paralyzed. I knew that these young trees would tear their way slowly through me, simply disintegrating me. Then I woke up in horror, calling to you——”

He stopped, his breath coming fast with the remembered fear.

“Not very happy, certainly. What do you think made you dream like that?”

“I think of the dead people—buried a long time, and how the roots of trees must go down through their bodies.” He shuddered.

“Doesn't hurt them much, after all, does it? What else do you think about?”

“Well, of course,” he said, hesitating between each word, “I naturally thought of the martyrs who were torn in two by being tied to the branches of strained young trees.”

“Yes?” she said, inquiringly. She was, on the surface, a psychologist analyzing a patient's unconscious thoughts. Deep down she was a woman who, because she was a psychologist, knew how much these unconscious thoughts meant to both of them.

“Well, wouldn't you?”

“Oh, everybody places a different construction on a dream,” she said, lightly. “Anything that's ever happened to them may go to make up the symbolism of a dream, you see. You associate trees with martyrdom—so would the little boy who had robbed an orchard, had a good licking, and on top of it severe stomach-ache, wouldn't he? Did you ever do that, Francis? Or—perhaps fall out of a tree when you were a little boy, and so associate the tree with pain?”

“No—I don't remember—but the Tree—in the Garden of

Eden, you know—temptation——” He was in deadly earnest.

“Oh yes, of course,” she said.

“And the Tree—the Cross of Christ—to a Christian, that means Pain and Expiation.”

There was a silence. She sprang out and started the car again; they went on slowly in the darkness. After about a mile they came to a straggling row of cottages, and then to the squat, ugly outbuildings of a forge. The furnaces had just been stoked; lurid crimson flames flared to the sky, lighting up Helen’s and Francis’s white faces, setting them on fire.

“There are other dreams——” he ventured.

“Yes? Tell me, Francis,” she said, all alert. She only realized how alert she was when her hand became cramped through the tension with which she was holding the steering wheel.

“I dream sometimes I am in a storm. Sometimes it is hail, sometimes rain. And as usual I am powerless to move. I seem to be chained, by my feet, to the ground, and the hail comes down, hurting my head. Gradually it strips off all my clothes: they seem to melt away in little torn shreds on the ground, and the hard icy rain or the hailstones beat on my body. I keep trying to get away, and can’t. The hail seems to be eating into my body like an acid—making dreadful little holes. It gives a horrible suggestion of decay. I seem to be there ages and ages in awful pain until gradually all my flesh melts away, absolutely lacerated off my bones, and I stand there a skeleton, still living and breathing and understanding. Sometimes it isn’t a hailstorm that strips me bare like that. Sometimes it’s the wind, a great hurricane. I seem to be going across a moor, and fire springs up out of the ground and burns off all my clothes and all my flesh.”

“Poor old boy! You certainly do go through it! Do you think much about your dreams, or do you just dismiss them as idle fantasies?”

“No, I can’t. They haunt me, and they come back so often.”

“What occurs to you, now you’re talking to me about them?”

“I am in a perfect maelstrom of thoughts, Helen. But—

that dream about the fire—do you know the Lyke Wake Dirge? It's a sixteenth-century ballad about the journey of the soul from the flesh."

"No." She shook her head. "I don't know very much poetry—only just the ordinary things."

He repeated it in a monotone:

"This ae nighte, this ae nighte,
Every nighte and alle,
Fire and sleet and candlelighte,
And Christe receive thy saule."

It goes on to say," he added, "that the soul that has given hosen and shoon to the poor will find them waiting when it has to pass through the stones and thorns of death; and when it comes to the fires of purgatory, if it had given meat and drink to the hungry, the fire would play about it harmlessly. But—see, it goes like this:

"If meat and drink thou ne'er gav'st nane,
Every nighte and alle,
The fire will burn thee to the bare bane,
And Christe receive thy saule."

His voice trailed off; she broke in hastily:

"But, Francis: supposing your soul did get to Purgatory fire! Lord knows you've given meat and drink, hosen and shoon enough to the poor—even at the expense of their independence and your health!"

"Ah, yes; but those things cost me nothing. Clothes and meat and drink are less than nothing to me. What I'm fighting to keep and not to give is my love—and the fires must burn that out."

He caught at her hand; his felt hot even through her glove. She drew the car to a standstill.

"All my dreams are of pain," he cried, "of losing my flesh! Oh, Christ, isn't it against the flesh we have to strive with groanings that cannot be uttered? Isn't it only by hellish pain that we either lose it or conquer it?"

In the distance behind them the forge flared up, throwing showers of gold sparks. They looked at each other's luridly lighted faces.

"Perhaps," she said, calmly, "that weird poem accounts for the fire dream—but the others?"

"I think," he said, slowly, as if piecing together a difficult problem, "I think it seems as if all the forces of nature are leagued against me. In any of these dreams of unbearable pain, and of losing my flesh, it's always inanimate things that hurt me, isn't it? It looks as if nature is my enemy—nature——"

"Aren't you putting it backwards? Aren't you the enemy of nature? Why are you suffering as you have suffered lately? It's simply because you love me and you're fighting the love because it's a thing of the flesh, and, as such, a thing to be renounced. You feel that you're being persecuted by nature. Can't you see, you poor dear, that you're torturing poor nature yourself? And last night, in your dream——"

"Last night," he broke in, hurriedly, "I dreamed the interpretation. I see it now! Trees—they're the forces of nature, too. And they stand to me as symbols of martyrdom and of expiation—from which you were to save me—Helen—as Christ asked in the Garden—under the trees—the trees—that the cup might pass from Him."

"Yes——" she began, but he would not listen.

"And He took the cup, after His momentary human weakness," he cried exultingly. "He sent away those glittering legions who would have come to minister unto Him!"

She felt all the strength ebb from her; here, she saw, was more than she could fight; here was madness, or genius, or faith, she could not begin to see with her sane, clear sight—and madness, genius and faith are unreasoning, unreasonable things not to be dealt with save unreasonably.

Then, as she saw him slipping out of her life because her own hands were not strong enough to hold him, she sensed exactly, in an instant's flash, what he meant to her. She set her teeth to fight for her happiness, and for his sanity that mattered infinitely more.

"Listen to me, Francis," she said, bluntly, profoundly thankful for the darkness that hid her trembling lips; "do you know you'll have to get married?"

"Oh——" he cried impatiently.

"I mean it! Lord, it's horrid to have to put it so bluntly,

but there it is! It's mostly physical, all this trouble, and it's making you unbalanced. You see, my dear, you haven't had any of the average young man's mild love affairs to break you in—and now this gust of passion has taken you unawares, and it's devastating you like a hurricane."

"It's so wrong, so degrading."

"Oh, rubbish! It's wrong because you've deliberately refused to look at it before. If you bend to this storm now, and let it have its way with you, you have many years of useful life before you. If you don't—well, it will smash you! You're fighting nature, and nature will win, and she'll have a terrible revenge on you. No one can go on being a storm-centre for ever."

"Helen," he cried, his voice breaking, "I can't. Don't tempt me any more. Can't you see that the more you show me that my happiness lies in marrying you, the more I must fight it because we must subdue the flesh? We, to whom the Light has shone, must, less than anyone, pander to lusts and desires—we of the household of faith—the aristocracy of the Sons of God—how dare we think of following after idols?"

Her eyes were wet with tears. He was leaning with his hands clasped on his knees, his face drawn with pain. At last he gave a long, weary sigh and seemed to collapse.

"There, I'm cruel!" she whispered. "I press you too far!"

"Oh, I'm so tired," he breathed. "These dreams—and not sleeping properly—don't try to make me do things any more! Just for to-night—let me know that for another hour I'm here close beside you, without complications, without obligations—I can forget it afterwards—when I begin to fight again."

She looked at his white face, his relaxed hands, and knew that he was worn out, unable to struggle any longer; she must leave the result of all her fighting in the hands of the gods. She dismissed the tears from her eyes, the trembling passion from her hands and her voice, as she had often had to conquer weariness and horror when she was at war with death and illness. But her effort was not reflected in her tone as she said, evenly:

"Very well, then—armistice is proclaimed. Do you feel warm?"

"Yes," he whispered, but his teeth were chattering. She drew the rugs close around him, looking down at his face as she bent over him. His weariness, his brokenness, were harder to fight than her love. Suddenly she could bear it no longer and, with the little inarticulate sound a mother makes as she buries her lips in her child's hair, she put her arms round him, drew him gently so that his head lay on her shoulder, and watched his hat go fluttering into the roadway as she smoothed his hair from his forehead. Trembling, he lay there quite still, breathing shallowly.

"There—you needn't be frightened of me any more," she whispered. "You are just a poor sick patient of mine, who is tired to death—you're not a great, big grown-up man to-night. Oh no—you're a poor little boy my car has run over, and I'm holding you close like this so that you won't be frightened. You're not very badly hurt—they've gone to fetch your mother, and the doctor, and all sorts of nice, gentle, soothing people to make you better. You can go to sleep till they come if you like. I'll take great care of you."

He had never heard her clear, brisk voice so low, so soft before; for this reason, it was more terrible to him than ever. He tore himself away from her arms, and, leaning against the hood of the car, began to shake with horrible sobs.

"Every minute you make me love you more, want you more," he cried. "When I don't want you in a tearing fire I want you in a quiet glow—I must go——"

He started to his feet, felt for his hat and could not find it. Next instant he had forgotten it.

"Don't be silly! You can't walk! We'll go home," she said, decidedly. "Oh, be damned to this car! Why haven't I got a self-starter? That's what I'd like someone to tell me!"

She sprang out to start the engine, and saw his hat lying on the road. She kicked it deliberately, and with set teeth, into the ditch. Then she sat down beside him and drove like a hurricane.

CHAPTER XI

As they passed through the village of Brinden's Ford, she looked at him. His eyes were closed. She thought he was almost asleep, for his face was lifeless; but his lips were moving, and she whispered, as she drove quietly past the sleeping little cottages, "Francis, are you asleep?"

"No." He opened his eyes and looked at her.

"If you won't marry me, or—or oblige in that sort of way—there is one little thing you can do."

"What's that?" he cried, eagerly.

"Will you take a week's holiday and stay with Louis at the Staff House and vegetate?"

"But my work!" he protested feebly.

"You'll do your work better after a week's rest. You're worn out. I'll find someone to preach on Sunday—I've a good mind to edify them by preaching myself!" she added, with a little, broken laugh.

"I think you are right," he said, after a long pause.

"Oh, thank you! What a concession! We'll go right there now—we can 'phone to your landlady. Then you can get right away to bed after a hot bath. I think I'd go in for electric baths for a week if I were you——"

He stared at her in surprise.

"Does it seem incongruous? Making love one minute, talking about baths the next? It isn't, really—it's only our stuffy way of thinking that makes it seem wrong."

"I'll do whatever you tell me. I want to sleep, and not feel as if things are fighting me."

They did not speak until they reached the hospital. Almost everybody was in bed. One nurse, sitting over some needlework for a birthday present, was there to answer the door when Helen rang the bell.

"Oh—Dr. Clevion," she said, in surprise at Helen's bare head.

"Has the doctor gone to bed yet?"

"Oh no. It's only ten o'clock. I'll tell him," she said. But at that moment Louis's door opened and he came out. He looked surprised, and came quickly across the passage to Helen. She explained in a few words.

"I've brought Francis. I've made him ill. Making love to him again. He's been having persecution delusions. He's coming to stay with you for a week to get a rest. Oh, Louis, I don't believe I shall be able to bear it," she added, her voice suddenly breaking.

He looked at her, thinking how strange women were—brave, enduring, controlled until they loved. He remembered, instantly, how, years ago, his wife had told him she could not bear it when love had come unbidden to her. And he said, quickly, gripping her shoulders, giving them a little shake:

"Oh yes, you will, and lots worse than this! We'll have him well in no time. He's worked to death, all his perspectives are wrong."

He left her, and went out to the car. The next minute he came in with Francis, who blinked a little in the strong light.

"I'll get your hat," said Louis, turning back.

"No, you can't," Helen said, shortly. "I kicked it into the ditch. Idiotic thing! Fancy wearing a hat like that—for Christ's sake!"

Suddenly she began to laugh shrilly.

Louis looked at her.

"Helen," he said, slowly, "go and put the car in the garage. It's Lloyd's night out. Nurse Walters will bring you a light, and show you where the electric switch is. I want your help to-night. I'm so glad you happened along—poor old Carnelly——"

She looked at him, realized that she had been almost hysterical, and flushed a little.

The next minute, without a word, she was following Nurse Walters to the garage. In the white flood of light she looked

very pale. When she had returned, Francis was no longer there.

Louis was standing in the doorway waiting for her.

"He's gone for a hot bath," he explained.

"Yes, I told him to. I think we might try faradic currents, don't you?"

"I'll get him to bed in a minute, and give him a dose of paraldehyde. I hate worrying you to-night, old girl, because you look worn out. But if you could go with Nurse Walters and have a look at old Carnelly——"

She went down the bricked path beside the pine trees that were rustling with soft, swishing voices. When they had reached the door and the night sister had arrived, Nurse Walters asked how Carnelly was.

"Why, he's quite well. He always sleeps like a child," she said, in surprise.

It dawned on Helen then that Louis had set her something to do so that she might get back her grip on herself. But she felt that she must look at the patient for the sake of the nurses' discipline, and tiptoed into the room in which he lay peacefully asleep, the wind from the pines playing in upon his face. When she once more reached the Staff House, Louis told her that Francis had gone to bed.

"You treat me like a woman—get rid of me," she said, smiling at him sadly. "But it was decent—and like a woman—of you to understand like that, and not let me make a further fool of myself."

"I wanted to get rid of you. As far as I could gather, there have been quite enough complications to-night. By the way, I've 'phoned to your house to say you're sleeping here. Mlle. Rousseau answered. She said she'd eat your supper as well as her own, for company, and then go to bed. I've let Reay's landlady know. And that's all."

"But is there room for me?"

"Heavens, yes—heaps of it. Three of the nurses are on leave, and there are the four rooms we keep for patients' visitors—they all happen to be empty to-night."

"Oh—good! I'll have one of the visitors' rooms, then. I'd hate anyone to sleep in my room if I were on leave."

She caught sight of herself in the mirror, dishevelled, wan and rather dusty, and announced that she needed a bath before she could tell him what had happened. Half an hour later, with coffee and cigarettes, she was sitting with an untouched supper-tray pushed back, telling Louis everything.

"You think I was right?" she asked, anxiously.

He puffed meditatively at his pipe.

"You were as right as a woman in love could be. You did your best. In fact, you were wonderful, old girl. But he's in a bad way. These delusions of persecution——"

He broke off and looked at her intently, gauging her courage.

"You think—his brain——" she began, and choked, and threw her cigarette into the fire.

"I think," he said, very slowly, "that unless the tension can relax, his brain—as the layman would say—will snap. There is great lack of balance to begin with. And now, with this sexual conflict added."

"If I went away?" she began in a thin voice, and next minute had started from her chair, pushing back her hair from her forehead, walking about as if she were caged and struggling. "No, I can't go away from him. I won't, anyway! Oh, isn't it a mad piece of lunacy to love anyone like this? Before I came he was perfectly happy, going about his work, staying up half the night praying, and the other half looking after people who'd take his last halfpenny and laugh at him. But certainly he was happy, hugging his little, futile martyrdom, and his blind faith. And so was I—busy—happy—till he challenged me about my lack of 'faith'—and—how *did* I get into this ridiculous mess? What *am* I going to do about him? You don't tell me to go away from him, do you? Oh, I'll just need to kidnap him! I'm getting panicky about him—and about myself, too."

"It's no earthly use your going away—even if you could bring yourself to leave your work so recklessly as that," said Louis, puffing at his pipe. "We'd get a much more sensible view of things if you sat down and didn't keep lighting my

cigarettes, giving them one puff and throwing them away again so extravagantly."

"I know I'm being an idiot," she said, and sat down in the chair bolt upright, her foot tapping on the floor.

"That's better. You see, Helen, it's up to you to keep your head, or Lord knows what further complications you'll get into. No, certainly don't go away. He'd be aching for you all the more if you did, and he'd idealize you more."

"Then am I to sit and look pretty while he goes all to pieces?"

"Do I usually counsel sitting still and watching people go all to pieces? No—we've got to get him married to you by some means or other. I'll talk to him—I'll try suggestion; you've done a lot already. For a week he'll be too tired to think; we must see to his general health first. Then—if I can take away this kink of his—— Helen, you're sure you want to marry him?" he added, doubtfully.

"Of course I am! Otherwise, what's all the fuss about?"

They both stood up.

"I'll look at him to see if he's sleeping. I gave him about half an ounce of paraldehyde; he should sleep till morning."

Nurse Walters had gone to bed. They went together up the wide stairs, from which a gallery branched off on either side. A subdued murmur of conversation came from one of the nurses' rooms; opposite, on what was called the Guest landing, two doors were open; within, faint lights were shining.

"Here's your room," said Louis, indicating the first. "I've asked Nurse Walters to see to things for you."

She walked past her own room and stopped at the open door of the room that had been allotted to Francis.

"Tell me how he is before I go to bed," she said, and stood at the door as Louis stooped over Francis. A nightlight, in a fluted globe, burned on a table beside the bed, casting a circle of softened light on to the ceiling, and fluted rays of dim radiance about the room. From the door she could see his face, gaunt yet strangely peaceful in sleep; but the bars of light and shade across it seemed like the bars of a cage between them. She took a step forward; his long, thin hand

lay on the white counterpane, completely relaxed. She laid her hand on it softly, looked at him, and turned away to the door again.

"Oh, I am an idiot, Louis!" she whispered.

"You are!" he said, smiling at her, "but not a bit more than I, or any other human being. Comforting, isn't it?"

He closed the door carefully.

"He'll sleep to-night. I don't think he'll dream. And tomorrow he'll sit in the sunshine, and things won't seem so shadowy. Good-night."

"Good-night, Louis. You're a tremendous friend. I feel he's safe with you."

"I wish you were as safe," he said, and turned away, leaving her wondering what he meant.

Nurse Walters affected a style of Greek simplicity in her nightgowns. The one she lent Helen was straight and long, trailing on the ground at her feet. But she was too tired to notice details and, comforted by Louis's air of confidence, went to sleep.

Louis, left alone, sat thinking for an hour. Occasionally he took a book from his shelves, consulted it, made a few notes and sat down to think again. He was by no means so confident as he had led Helen to believe; he had told her, provisionally, that Francis would be cured by marriage—but there were things he had noticed—puzzling things. He was glad to have this opportunity of studying the priest more closely.

CHAPTER XII

ONCE in the night Louis stirred, thinking he heard a sound in the house. But it was not repeated, and he turned over and went to sleep. In the garden underneath the windows spiders spun the delicate grey tracery of their webs among the Michaelmas daisies and chrysanthemums; heavy mist rose in wreaths, swaying in the light of the late risen moon. Suddenly Helen wakened, and sat bolt upright in bed, looking instinctively for the glimmering square of her window at home. She thought, at first, that the night-bell had roused her and, reaching out her hand, tried to find the ear-piece of the speaking-tube. It took her one moment to realize where she was and to wonder what had wakened her; there was an extraordinary sense of urgency wrapping her round, an instinct rather than a certainty.

Still scarcely awake, she sprang out of bed, the long night-gown impeding her feet as she ran across the room and leaned through the open window. The white mist wreaths rocked and swayed, but all was silent. The moon was invisible through the mist, but the white effulgence was everywhere. She heard a sound, and turned sharply. The thick plait of her hair became caught on the window fastening; it pulled her backwards as she tried to move, and she tugged at it impatiently. Francis was standing by the door; he had opened it sharply, noisily, and was standing looking at her.

"Helen," he said, hoarsely, and came into the room, leaving the door wide open.

"Wait a minute. My hair's caught," she said, remembering the necessity of talking quietly. "Are you ill?"

Her tremulous fingers had merely entangled the hair more, but she gave it a quick, impatient tug and tore herself free.

"What's the matter, Francis?"

He tottered forwards, one hand clenched on the rail of the bed. His eyes gleamed, dilated, lighted as though from within; she stared at him and saw agony on his face, despair such as she had never seen even in the most horrible suffering, together with a strange vitality, an eagerness.

Noticing the open door, she went to it, listened to learn if Louis or any of the nurses had been disturbed, and closed it quietly. He was still standing, shaking, his face uncontrollable. She caught him by the shoulders and gripped them.

"Were you dreaming again, my dear? And you came to me."

His hand fell from the rail, his eyes blazed into hers; his arms, long, thin and tense, as though every nerve and fibre of them were a separate, sentient thing desiring her, caught at her, holding her urgently until she could scarcely breathe. She wished, now, that she had not closed the door; she wished she had wakened Louis, for she was afraid, not of him, but for him. His hand caught in her hair, drew her head back, and frightening kisses began to burn on her lips. Her eyes closed, her cheeks flamed, and she clung to him, unable to understand, thinking for a wild moment that he was still asleep, but hoping that he would waken and still be the same. All sorts of wild ideas flamed through her brain. Had Louis been talking to him while she slept? Had he, of himself, lost the control which had been separating them? She stopped breathing, ceased for a moment to live as it blazed in upon her that, however it had come about, here they were with the positions reversed—here was he, afire with love—and here was her moment to win him, to prove to him that all along he had been fighting a shadow.

When he spoke, the words came thick and incomplete from his trembling lips.

"Helen," he breathed, "there's only you——"

"Yes," she whispered, "yes, my dear."

"I've lost Him—in the darkness——"

"What is it, dear? Tell me all about it," she whispered, soothingly, as one speaks to a troubled child. She looked about the room for a chair, but could see only a little frail thing that she knew could not bear his urged tremblings. So she made him sit on the bed, and she knelt beside him, holding

his hand, stroking it. He caught at her and dragged her roughly towards him until she was sitting by his side, his arm taut around her.

"All a delusion—He made them to believe strong delusion. Oh, God! I asked Him for a sign that I might know I was acceptable unto Him. I asked Him to touch my lips with coals from the altar."

His hand caught hers, twisted it convulsively into his as he broke out:

"Everything crashes about me. You are not going to forsake me?"

"You know I'm waiting to snatch you all the time, don't you?"

"Do you think I'm wrong? Oh, don't think I'm wrong!" he cried, imploringly. "I can't be wrong. What was there, but Christ, to come between us? I asked Him for a sign—He showed me that He was man as I am. The flesh and the spirit, Helen—and there is no spirit, now. The flesh triumphs!"

To her this was heresy, but she said nothing; she felt that the time for speaking was past between them.

"He gave me a sign, a cynical, cruel sign. Oh no—it was only a sad, desolate sign, for He could not be cruel! He told me He was man—common clay—oh, Christ!—with our weaknesses! Surely He hath borne our infirmities and carried our sorrows. I know, now, how they felt, those lovers of His, when they watched Him dying all that hot day—Him they had thought their King! They knew their faith was vain, when they saw His body in the grave! 'Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean; the world has grown grey with Thy breath!' All through the ages—a snare and a delusion. And the flesh conquers——"

"Why shouldn't it—in this one thing, Francis? We're not disembodied, are we? To kill all claims of the flesh is suicide—we've both done it too much——"

Once again his lips were on hers, and she was trembling, not from fright at what might happen, but for fear one of his sudden fits of changeableness should part them even now. She had so much faith in herself, and in the inevitable sameness

and rightness of human nature, that she was convinced that if she could prove to him that physical love was not a thing of the devil, she could set him at harmony with himself, give him joy instead of this inexplicable despair that had seized upon him; cool, serene-eyed love for this mad blast of tortured passion.

"I've wanted you so," he whispered, pleading not with her, but with his inner self. "I've wanted to kiss you so often. And always I have fought it. When I've seen you going about, so gallant, like a beautiful white ship in sail, I've felt I could not bear it—I've fought——"

"You've fought only a shadow, dear. Love isn't a thing to fight. Christ is a lover coming to claim His bride—isn't that how they symbolize it?"

"Oh, I've wanted you so long, so long," he breathed, impatient of her words. "You've seemed a beautiful bright sword—so keen, so untouched, and I've wanted to seize you! You've been so brave fighting me—and I wanted to make you soft and yielding—oh, I can fight you no more. I've wanted to be weak—and He was weak——"

"I'm here!" she gasped; "and what you call weakness is really strength."

She felt his breath on her neck, his cheek brushing hers, his lips finding her eyes and closing them with kisses; she found herself thinking astonishing things; she wished she were not in Louis's house. This seemed, somehow, a breach of his hospitality. She wished she were not wearing Nurse Walters' nightdress. "Ring" *motifs* sang through her head—the Grail *motif* from *Parsifal*; then it seemed that she was engaged in a surgical operation and her fingers had stiffened so that she could not tie a pumping artery. She wished she would stop thinking, reasoning, wondering, and lose herself as completely as he could. She wished the Grail *motif* would stop singing in her brain. And all the time, as their sentient lives were rushing together to one immense impact, she was thinking, underneath, that they were two icebergs, driven together by opposing currents to common, regardless disintegration. Presently, when he had fallen asleep with his head on his outflung

arms, she sat beside him on the bed, watching him, her feet tucked up underneath her, trying to analyze herself, trying to understand him as the grey light crept along through the mists. Thoughts floated into her mind for a while, vanished, and flickered back; she wondered about Mr. Crane at Hill Crest, and thought of the smell of marigolds. She thought of Lizzie, and Amy Willis, Mrs. Schlegel and Jacqueline—all “weak” women, and wondered curiously if they felt about their weakness as she did, a little disappointed, and rather gasping at the futility of passion which seemed not worth all it had already cost her. She thought of what she had whispered to Francis about Christ and the Church, the Bride and the Bridegroom, and wished she had not said it. It was so obvious, so insincere. She did not believe it. Christ as the Lover of the Church was only another piece of symbolism—another relic of the sexual in religion, on a par with that morbid contemplation of His sufferings which was part of a primitive sexual lust to see the sufferings of a beloved—obscene things to be stripped from the clean, stark body of life.

Then, again, she found herself wondering what had caused his complete revulsion, and from that she passed to the easier, happier thought that now they would be married; he would, she felt sure, feel that he owed it to her, whatever his waking thoughts on the subject; and she had the rest in her own hands; marriage, with its sanity and its devotion, would be his salvation.

As she watched him, his eyes opened, and he held out his arms to her and raised himself so that he could bury his face, tired and off guard, on her breast. A distant hooter in the Pits tore the silence; a bird fluttered against the window, and a cock crowed. He groaned.

“Oh, Helen——”

“My darling,” she whispered, kissing his hair. “You’re not unhappy—now, are you?”

“Oh, what does it matter?” he sobbed. The cock crew again, wakening another, and they chorused together. He began to sob bitterly, pushing her away from him, and the next minute snatching her back.

"Without Christ in the world—of all men most miserable," he cried, and dashed the tears away and looked at her. "Do you know what threw me at you last night? Oh, Helen, can you forgive me?"

"There's nothing to forgive," she murmured.

"I'd lost my Lord," he cried. "No, there's nothing more to forgive, or to care about. He is dead—and there is none to roll away the stone."

"I don't understand a bit," she said, softly, stroking his hand, and lifting it to her lips. "Poor boy—you seem such a child——"

"No. You don't understand! It means nothing to you that I have lost my Lord. Like Mary in the Garden. They had taken away His body, she thought, and she knew not where they had laid Him. But after that she saw Him smiling at her. He will never smile at me again—He is dead. My faith also is vain—— Helen," he added, with passionate earnestness, "as I fought for Him in the past, now I shall fight against Him. I shall kill the faith of others as He has killed mine. Listen!"

He began to speak, rapidly, as a man talks when he is drugged, with his eyes set and fixed. She was frightened at his tone of horror.

"When I went to bed last night, Farne gave me something. It was very soothing. I lost my body completely. As I fell asleep I was aching, aching, through being near you, fighting you, and I felt too tired. I prayed as I fell asleep, and asked Him for a sign. Then I floated away on a sort of warm cloud——"

The hand that clutched hers was hurting her with its grip; his left hand lay limp and tired on her knee.

She began to see light—he had asked for a sign: his unconscious mind had given him the sign his body craved, in the honesty of sleep.

"I dreamed," he said—"you remember my first dream I told you about? The girl and the boy in the cedar grove, and how he went away and left her weeping?"

She nodded.

"It wasn't the cedar grove any longer. They had grown up, and had travelled far. It was a house, a rich house with tessellated pavement like the Romans had, and many people were coming in to a feast. They were Jews, most of them—a few Greeks and Romans. How do I know that?"

He shook his head, and passed a limp hand over his eyes.

"Some of them were greatly honoured; water was brought in for their feet; their host, a Jew, suave and polite, spoke to them, and bowed and welcomed them. They seemed very rich; the feast prepared was rich, too. Then they all looked one way, and some laughed and whispered behind their hands and said, 'Here he is—the latest sensation!' 'Last week a poet from Crete! Simon has them all to his house,' said another; 'next week an Egyptian sorcerer; this week the Galilean prophet!' I stared, and wanted to bow the knee, because it was my Lord. But He came in very quietly, and a few peasants with Him. I felt Him drawing me, without words, to His side. The wealthy folks laughed a little; Simon, politely contemptuous, told Him to find a seat; the peasants stood about Him, and there was much talking and laughter. I kept my eyes fastened on His face, for I knew that He was giving me, His servant, this vision for a sign. So I waited—and even then I had not recognized Him as the boy in the cedar grove——"

He broke off, muttering. She stooped her head to listen. "Of all men most miserable—now is my preaching vain—without Christ in the world."

"Was that all?" she said, gently.

"All? God, why did you not send lightnings from heaven to kill me while that was all?" he sobbed. "No. . . . As I watched, and adored Him, I heard voices outside forbidding, some of them, wheedling and chaffing, and a woman's voice compelling. Then she came in, richly dressed and scented. She went across to my Lord, and there were voices disputing, and many pressed round Him. When next I could see, she was kneeling on the ground, with her beautiful hair—like yours, Helen—all about His feet, and the fragrance of Araby stealing about us. They spoke soft words together, and she got up

from her knees, coming out from the throng. Then I saw why her face had seemed familiar at the first, but strange. Her eyes were no longer bold; she had been crying, and they were luminous now; the tears had washed away the paints such women use. And I looked from her to my Lord, who was sad—oh, sad, Helen! And their faces were—I knew it then—the faces of those two in my first dream.”

She caught her breath at the terror, the desolation, that the dream must have caused him; she was trembling with the desire to make him understand that it was only a dream, a wish-fulfilment of his own brain, and not a divine revelation. But he went on, almost frantically:

“Can’t you see it? Even if He never saw her again from that day in the grove till the day she came to Him, a sorry woman of the streets, it was His fault! He had taught her love! His kisses had set alight her flesh—as you and I have set each other alight.”

She clenched her hands, wondering what to do, where to begin. And, for all her cool science, she was almost afraid at what seemed horrible irreverence against something humanity held sacred. She wished she could go and hurl it all at Louis, in one instant, and in the next she knew that she must see it through alone.

“So I came to you. I have fought my body too long for His sake. I have fasted because my Lord fasted in the wilderness; I have watched during long nights because He had not where to lay His head. I have fought love. Ever since I knew you I have fought love. Before I knew you, when first I gave my life to Him, I had to fight—as most men and boys have—not love, but lust. I did it all for Him—for my Lord. Helen, why should I fight, deny myself, when He was weak?”

“Oh, you’re so wrong—so hopelessly, illogically wrong,” she began eagerly, but he was not listening to her.

“I have wept in speechless rage against those disciples who slept when my Lord waked in agony in the Garden, Helen. I wonder now, did they sleep because they knew He did not want their wakeful love? Perhaps they thought that she would come—— Perhaps Peter, denying Him, felt that he was justi-

fied. They had been faithful, as I have been—had they found then that their Lord had feet of clay? Do all His servants find it in time? Is that why Christianity fails?”

He buried his face in his hands, clenched them, and gripped hers again, almost in a frenzy. She faced him resolutely.

“I’ll tell you one thing, Francis; it will probably sound queer, coming from me, after all I’ve said about this religious kink of yours. I think you’re being most horribly unjust! You’re just as unfair as those disciples were. And you’ll realize it in time. They did, if we can place any trust at all in the New Testament. Most of them plunged heart and soul into their Lord’s gospel after He died, and almost courted martyrdom. Possibly they wanted to show their self-disgust at their previous cowardice——”

“But the fabric of my faith——” he began.

“Rested on your conception of Christ as something unreal, inhuman, all camouflaged with witchcraft and idolatry and magic. These things do for children—very tiny children, if their mothers are silly enough to teach them such fables. And they do for primitive people. But they don’t do for modern people. Naturally a faith founded on so impossible a hypothesis would crumble; you made this Christ of yours an utterly impossible thing and tried to live like Him. The point is, my dear, that *you made Him* out of your own psychology, just as we all make our idols. Just as those heathen we try to convert make a ju-ju with six hands, big green eyes and legs fifteen feet long. But even they are not silly enough to try to be like it.”

He was staring at her, open-mouthed. Quiet steps went along the landing into the next room; there was a tap on the door, but neither of them, in their absorption, noticed it. The knock was repeated, more loudly.

“Come in,” said Helen, mechanically. “Oh—good heavens!” she added, flushing painfully as Louis, in his dressing-gown, stood on the threshold, looking at her sitting cross-legged on the pillow, and at Francis, who was lying with his head propped upon one hand. Then she sighed, and said again, “Oh, come

in, Louis, and shut the door; we're in a fearful muddle and unhappiness again."

He came into the room, looking past her to Francis, at his trembling lips, and into his eyes. Then he took his hand and held it for a minute.

"What have you been doing to him?" he said, turning to Helen.

She did not seem able to speak. He took a case of cigarettes from his dressing-gown pocket, offered them to Helen, who took one mechanically, and then to Francis, who could not notice them.

"They have taken away my Lord——" began Francis.

"What's it all about, Helen? I meant him to sleep," said Louis, leaning over the bed-rail.

Francis, springing from the bed, began to stride about, with steps that were urgent in intention but lagging in effect.

"He's been dreaming again," she said hurriedly. "Apparently he dreamed that Christ was—the cause of Mary Magdalene—and that was why He was so kind to her."

"What a dream!" murmured Louis, "for a Christian!"

"Yes—he came to me—and—and let everything rip! I was glad. It seemed my chance—like getting a man on the rebound when another woman has hurt him. And—he came in here—I simply let everything rip too——" She broke off, her eyes bright with tears now. "It was my fault, Louis—I've been positively blazing with this silly sex business for weeks, just because it was unknown and took me unawares. I deliberately made myself get bowled over. And now—oh——"

He looked at her steadily, and said in matter-of-fact tones:

"The thing now, old girl, is to keep your head, isn't it? Above all things you've got to keep your head; push the personal side out for a bit. He's lost, you see—anchorless. He's too overturned to care a damn about love just at this minute. Last night—well, you were a safety-valve."

She shivered, and her voice broke as she whispered:

"He thought the dream was a divine revelation, an answer to his prayer for a sign."

Francis turned suddenly, and, standing beside Louis, looked at her wildly, beating at the air with his hands that he raised with pain and dropped heavily.

"A sign? Yes—a sign! A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign. And he proved that my faith was vain."

"Francis," said Helen, pleadingly, catching his trembling hands in hers, "can't you come out of this world of signs and wonders and superstitions? You know now—after last night—that loving isn't—the—the dreadful thing you thought——"

"They have taken away my Lord!" he cried wildly. "This hot, panting fever to possess—— Oh, God, to think that He should have known it!"

"But—why not? It's not——" began Helen, but Louis silenced her with a peremptory motion and she flung herself on the bed, sitting with her feet underneath her, all hunched up as though she could not summon enough strength to remain upright.

"Listen to me, Reay!" said Louis, suddenly, speaking slowly. "Why do you think you had that dream?"

"Farne, you can understand!" he said, eagerly, desperately. "Last night I asked for a sign! He gave it to me. Either it was because my service was not acceptable to Him and He wanted to kill my faith, or else because He wanted to show me that He was weak—that He was not divine."

"Why do you think that?"

"If He had been divine He could not have let the flesh triumph. Imagine it! His commandment to Mary to go and sin no more! That is one of the fundamentals of Christianity, and—it was not because He hated sin that He told her that. It was because He loved the sinner!"

"It's more like a God to be sorry for a sinner than to hate sin," gasped Helen, passionately, unable to be silent. And, though he could not take in the sense of her words, they brought her to his notice again.

"Oh, God, I made you sin, too!" he cried, staring at her with horror dilating his eyes.

"Oh, rubbish! It's no more sin than eating and drinking——"

"It were better that a millstone were tied round his neck, and he were cast into the depths of the sea," he muttered, and met her glimmering eyes with his wild ones.

"If there's anyone to blame in this matter, it's me," said Helen, decidedly. "I haven't given you a minute's peace."

"Couldn't you possibly stop talking, Helen?" said Louis.

With an impatient shrug she tried to obey him, watching his face and Francis's as they talked.

"You said, Reay," went on Louis, conversationally, "that God wanted to kill your faith. Why should He want to do that, do you think?"

"Because my work is not acceptable to Him."

"And yet—you've done your best, surely?"

"God knows I have! All these years—I have tried to live as Christ lived."

"Then do you think it's just of God to be annoyed that you didn't do more?"

"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" he asked, miserably.

"But would the Judge of all the earth, out of personal pique, trouble to annihilate the faith of one small servant who didn't do more than his strength allowed?"

"I denied Him part of my price, and He has killed my faith—He killed Ananias and Sapphira because they kept back part of the price of the land——"

"Did he?" said Louis, dryly. "I think, Reay, if you'd been there you'd have thought differently! Don't you think, perhaps, that unpleasant tale was invented either by an apostle who was a bit acquisitive, or else by an enemy who wanted to show what terrible things these apostles were up to? I don't pretend to be a Christian—but I'm hanged if I can remember anything Jesus ever said that suggests He could annihilate a man for human weakness. Reay, do you think anything can be annihilated except in the ordinary course of nature? Why do you think God should do freakish things?"

"The whole fabric of Christianity depends on miracles."

"Think so? I don't. Don't you rather think that Christ's followers were so soaked in magic that they—they sought for signs? He said that about them, didn't He? They do it to-day, too—look at the nauseating stunts spiritualists get up to! I don't believe Christ thought anything about miracles. He went about doing good, preaching sanity. He healed the sick, certainly, because He gave them courage to heal themselves. But that's nothing! If you worship Him for that—why, Lord, man—you ought to crawl along Harley and Wimpole streets on your knees, because there are heaps of men there who do miracles. And they'll do more as psychology is better understood. Christ was just a sort of spiritual anti-toxin, don't you know?"

Francis was staring at him, and Louis saw that he was not listening. His brain was saturated by one thought; there was no room in it yet for logical reasoning. He immediately changed his tactics.

"These dreams of yours——"

"Yes—my dreams!" he cried, awakened to interest again.

"You have been in love with Helen for a long time?"

"I've fought it—oh, God, how I have fought!"

"Exactly! You've fought it and got your mind into just the state Europe was in during the war! Chaotic! Everything but the fight went by the board. You didn't quite know how you were fighting, but you went on, laying about you in all directions, wearing yourself out. For you Christ has always been the most important figure in the world. If I'd asked you yesterday what Christ stood for to you, what would you have said?"

"Chastity—sacrifice," cried Francis, beginning his tragic parade again.

"Yes. And as soon as you began to love Helen you dreamed of chastity being assailed, didn't you?"

"I didn't think it was my Lord, then. I thought it was just a dream," he said, and his agonized eyes caught Helen's, who smiled at him reassuringly.

She had subsided into silence: her brain had grasped the

line of Louis's argument, and she felt supreme confidence in his power.

"No, you didn't think so consciously. But your dream-mind—the underneath mind over which you have no control—dressed him and gave him the surroundings of Christ, made him even repeat certain Bible words——"

"Yes, yes—Farne—and last night——"

His frantic voice was in strange contrast to Louis's cool, firm tones.

"Last night you were at the limit of endurance. You wanted to give way. You consciously kept on fighting, you consciously bolstered up that quaint idea of priestly asceticism, though you were beginning to see that it had never been anything but a panic measure. But however much you can lie to your conscious and keep it under control, your unconscious is honest. It gets up and hits you between the eyes with the truth. It shows you things as the child or the primitive man sees them, in pictures. It doesn't say to you, 'Francis Reay, you're in love with Helen Clevion, and you're making a confounded muddle of both your lives by not admitting the fact.' It took the thing that symbolized chastity for you, and showed it to you vulnerable. Those dreams, my dear fellow, came out of your own heart. They no more came from God——"

"Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts; these are the things that defile a man," quoted Francis, looking from one to the other in utter terror.

"Quite! That's a text psycho-analysts make a lot of. What's good in you, Reay, and what's bad in you are there all the time. You can call them God and the devil in conflict, if you like to be picturesque. You can call them the primitive and the civilized—doesn't matter what you call them, does it? Which wins depends on you, and not—except very indirectly and inspirationally—on Christ or Buddha, or any other person who lives or lived. You've to be your own censor in these things; you've to be your own law and prophets."

He broke off, and took a step towards Francis, whose jaw had dropped as he stood staring at Helen. She leaned against the window-sill, watching him anxiously.

"You mean," he stammered, and the words came broken from his trembling lips, "those dreams—out of my own heart—fornications—adulteries?"

His hands began to saw the air, as though seeking something to grip.

"They're by no means as bad as all that, Reay!" said Louis, smiling at him. "The average thoughts of the average man, that's all! It's your training that's made them seem wrong—as someone says somewhere in the Bible: 'By the law came sin'; didn't it?"

"I *invented* that about my Lord and Mary?" he cried.

"Course you did! It was your own repressed desire getting up and hitting you. But now——"

A slow flush was rising on Francis's white face. Helen took a step towards him, tripping in the long nightdress. He did not look at her, but at Louis, and cried:

"I pierced His feet! I drove the nails into His hands! . . . Twice pierced His gospel-bearing Feet . . . and all the time He never said a word to me. . . . As a sheep before her shearers is dumb. . . . Oh, Christ, what burdens bowed Thy head——"

Suddenly he was down on his knees, clinging to the rail of the bed, his knuckles white as he sobbed, horrible, harsh, coughing sobs.

"Our load—was laid on Thee," he croaked.

Helen, almost frantic with pain, flew across to him. Louis caught her arm and whispered:

"We'll have to quieten him. He'll have to sleep. The keys are on the table by my bed—go to the glass cupboard in the study—chloral hydrate and pot. brom. Be quick——"

"Oh, Lord," Francis was sobbing, "I have sinned against the Holy Ghost. I have kept back part of the price. I have sinned! No more unto the stubborn heart with gentle knocking—shall He plead——"

Louis laid his hand hard on the shaking shoulders. His forehead was lined, and his eyes were narrowed as he sought back to the days when he went to church for words that

should comfort Francis by their familiarity. And as he sought they came to him.

"Reay," he said, slowly, distinctly, "if—we—confess—our—sins—He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. You've said that a good many times in church. Don't you believe it?"

The rail of the bed shook with the trembling of his hands, as his white face turned to look with a frown into Louis's eyes that held his, compelling his attention.

"Yes——" he cried with dawning hope.

"Then what's all the fuss about?" said Louis, casually.

He stared at Louis drowningly.

"Lord, I believe! Help Thou mine unbelief!" he cried, falling forward again.

"Of course He will—His property is always to have mercy, surely?" said Louis.

Helen, coming into the room, stared to hear such words on his lips, and it came to her in a flash that Louis was a much finer psychologist, with his fluid mind, than she, with strong, uncompromising convictions, could ever be. And Louis thanked the luck that had taken him back more than twenty years to the hot Sunday mornings in church when he used to tell his sister that, between his Etons and the Litany, he had had a devilish time of it.

She held the little phials and the medicine glass in her hand.

"Got them?" he murmured. "Good! He's got back his Christ again. But whether he's exchanged his reason for it——"

A look of hope, of childish confidence was irradiating Francis's face from the moment Louis had said the word "mercy." Helen heard him muttering, and caught the words:

"And while they say my Lord is dead, My eyes are on His shining head——"

Then he felt the faint movement of her presence near him. Before either of them could guess what was to happen he had sprung to his feet; all his collapsed strength seemed to have come back to him, and the dawning peace died out of his eyes

as he flung out a stiff arm at her. His face flushed, the veins in his forehead were distended.

"You—you! The Scarlet Woman! Drunken with the blood of the Saints and of the Martyrs of Jesus! Woman—Mystery—the Mother of Harlots—and Abominations——" *

"Francis!" she cried, but he seized her by the throat, shaking her, his hands clawing at her hair and her nightdress. For an instant she was too sickened, too grieved to attempt to save herself. Then she realized that he was a sick man, dangerous to himself and to her, and, as Louis gripped his elbows, she tore herself away.

"Run away, Helen—send Nurse Walters and Miles," he said quietly. She knew that he was right and, too sick with horror to think, hurried from the room, weak at the knees, realizing that she was horrible to him. It was not until she had seen Nurse Walters run into the room where one of the male nurses slept, that she remembered her clothes, and asked her to fetch them for her.

An hour later, dressed and cool and quiet, she went into Louis's study.

The door leading to his little private laboratory was open; on the table were two books. He was in the laboratory, with new slides on the stand beside his microscope. He saw her, and came into the study.

"Is he asleep?" she said, frowning.

"Yes. He will sleep this time."

Over the moor was the sound of a machine mower in the late oats: nearer, a peewit made its melancholy cry over the heather.

"What do you think of him?" she asked, rather faintly. "Oh—shut up," she added, impatiently, to the peewit under her breath.

"Of course he is at a crisis—or rather, he was an hour ago. But he must stay here. You realize that?"

"You mean—indefinitely?" she asked, still more thinly.

"Yes, you know it as well as I do. By the way, have you had some tea yet, or a cigarette?"

* Rev. xvii. 5.

She shook her head.

"I can't—oh, I wish that confounded peewit would stop," she told him. He closed the window quietly. "Yes, of course I know it. I've seen it coming—— But it's so hard to know it about him, isn't it? If only I could have got him safely married before this crisis!"

"If only! Yes, of course. It's those damnable 'if onlies' that have filled up this place, isn't it? But I can cure him, you know!"

"Yes, I believe you can," she said, meeting his eyes bravely. "But it's pretty awful to have to realize the need of cure in a man you love. Oh, this wretched sex problem! Why on earth it should have happened to me, of all people!"

"My dear girl, it happens to everybody, though, thank the Lord, it doesn't always cause such a contretemps. With poor Reay the thing's been a vicious circle. As he was when I put him to sleep he has got back his religion and lost his reason. But at any rate he is not in conflict with himself. He—he has got rid of you, you see."

She nodded, wincing a little.

"He will be perfectly peaceful when he awakens, I expect. I shall try to reconstruct him from that, you see. You and I between us have smashed his psychology pretty thoroughly. He may have religious mania for a bit, but unless there's any actual organic trouble, we'll get him better. I'll have to try to hunt up his family history, just to make sure."

"I don't know much about his people. There's an aunt who gave the pianola to the Mission, and he talks sometimes about his mother, who, I have understood, gave him his horror of women. But he's always seemed so detached," she said.

She went over to the window and stood there for some moments.

"Louis," she said, "I want to go and see him while he's asleep."

"It can't do him any good."

"No. It will do me good," she said, quietly.

She followed him up to the room; as she went inside the door she shivered. Nurse Walters, looking profoundly unin-

quisitive, was sitting by the window, listening to the mowing machine. Francis was lying restfully on his side, his right arm pillowing his head, the left flung out heavily, just as he had lain in the night when she had sat up hunched on the pillow watching him. The light morning wind sent the thin muslin curtains billowing into the room; the peewit wheeled nearer over the heather, screaming. Helen stood looking at Francis for a moment, her head on one side, considering.

"Come along," said Louis. "Breakfast. There's nothing you can do for him."

She smiled across at Nurse Walters and followed him out of the room.

At breakfast nothing was said of Francis. Helen did not attempt to eat, but drank three cups of coffee and sat with her elbows on the table, her face between her hands, looking out through the window as Louis read his letters.

"I'd like you to see my son," he said at last, looking up from a letter with a smile.

"Your son!" she said, startled. "I never associated you with a son!"

"Oh yes! He's eight years old—nearly nine."

"But where have you concealed him all this time?"

"He lives almost at John o' Groat's in an ancient, bare farmhouse with two grim old Scotswomen. It was my wife's home. They make them strong 'up there.'"

"And she is dead," said Helen, wakening to other interests than her own. He blessed the opening the boy's letter had given him. He had been casting about in his mind for something to interest her.

"I don't mean only physical strength. But he's a great chap, is young Andrew. I suppose his education will have to be getting along in real earnest soon. At present one of the old Anzacs who lost both legs in the war is teaching him; in his leisure moments he writes a voluminous book on his war experiences. He's really a clever fellow. I had him as a shell-shock patient for a while, but he didn't seem to buck up much. Then we recognized each other. I'd known him in

my Australian days; he'd been fond of my wife. He seemed glad to go into retirement and teach the boy while he wrote his book. As he is endowed with a passion for detail, he will probably be ninety more years writing it. I'd like to take you there some day, Helen—at any rate, I'd love you to see the boy."

She murmured something vaguely, and tried for a fleeting instant to piece together Louis's life before she had known him. Theirs was one of those queerly intimate, utterly uninquisitive friendships so rare but so satisfying. They simply took each other for granted and left everything else. Then her thoughts sunk again into an ocean of dreams.

CHAPTER XIII

JACQUELINE was sewing. The typewriter was covered on her little table. She looked white and fragile, rather like a Dresden shepherdess. Helen remembered that she had not taken her out in the car for some days, in all the excitement and extra work of getting Bethesda completed.

"You look fagged, Jacqueline," she said, sitting down to open her letters. "You don't get out half enough."

"I mek chemise and trosis for meself," said Jacqueline, surveying her work with satisfaction. She was embroidering gold-and-orange wasps on black silk. Helen looked up from her letter with an indulgent smile.

"Bit hectic, aren't they? Not much like you, Jacqueline. White with tiny rosebuds is more like you."

"Dat es bee-utiful for bride. Dis t'ing I t'ink I need soon," said Jacqueline. Helen did not grasp her meaning.

"By the way, will you go and see Dr. Farne—to-day if you can manage it? You'd better ring him up and ask him when he's free. He wants you to help him—there's a woman in the hospital, a pretty little creature, and he wants her to have some nice new things before she goes back home. I guessed you would like to go shopping."

Jacqueline's eyes sparkled with pleasure at the idea. Helen was too absorbed to notice.

"I like M. le Docteur. He laugh at me. Voule you permet me, Madame, to 'ave taxi? I cannot put on my common shoe to see 'im, and I cannot walk in dirty street wit' my bee-utiful *gris* shoe. I spend all my *monnaie* on des t'ing."

"Yes, ring up the garage," said Helen, deep in her letter.

"I t'ank you, Madame. Do you like Shellpeet?"

"Like it? I certainly don't. Most of it wants burning down as London was after the Plague."

"I 'ate et, me *aussi*, Madame. I 'ate des dirty workin' class de people. I 'ate its rude *voix*, its rude face, its ogly dress! I 'ate de servant people!"

"Why, you funny little thing! That's just as illogical as my hating a patient whose disease made him ugly."

"I cannot 'elp it! Always I 'ave 'ate der sick people, der dirty people. It are ogly. I want everyt'ing bee-utiful in my eye."

The church clock struck eleven and Helen started to her feet, conscious that, though the day seemed a century long already, it had scarcely begun. As she hurried from the room, Jacqueline went back to her black-and-orange silks.

Mrs. Watkins' baby had broncho-pneumonia and was lying on a made-up bed in the kitchen of the little four-roomed house. Foul-smelling steam from the washing in the scullery hung about the hot room. The child lay with flushed cheeks, panting for breath; a worn blanket covered him.

"I thought as I couldn't come along to-day, mum, I'd seize the chance and 'ave a good washing day," explained Mrs. Watkins.

"I think I'd leave that and look after baby," said Helen, gently. "He ought to be upstairs."

Something boiled over on the fire and a cloud of ash and steam rose. Mrs. Watkins took the lid off a saucepan, releasing an overpowering smell of Irish stew.

"I thought if I had him 'ere I could keep my eye on him better," she explained. "The air seems fresher down here."

"Isn't there a sitting-room?"

"Well, there's the parlour," said Mrs. Watkins, grudgingly. "But it's so hard to get coal if I was to light another fire."

"Send your husband round to-night to get a few pailsful from Maud. We had a ton just a little while ago, and we don't use it much, having the gas fires. Have you any blankets?"

"I was afraid he might be sick on my best blankets and spoil them."

"Oh, they'll wash—you're such a splendid washer, aren't

you? Now let's see if we can't make the parlour into a little hospital for the time being."

Mrs. Watkins opened the door with an odd mixture of pride and protection, and showed the room, in its untouched splendour. Even in this four-roomed home of ten people it was sacred. Only on funeral and wedding days was its pink-and-green plush magnificence allowed to astonish the world. It smelled of dust and linoleum and stale air. The family's best clothes lay over the backs of chairs, or on pegs on the door.

"I always like to keep my parlour nice," said Mrs. Watkins, proudly. The child began to cry chokily and she turned to go to him.

"I'd light the fire and open the window wide for half an hour, if I were you, and then wrap him in a blanket and bring him in. I'll 'phone to the district nurse to lend you some things. You see, if he goes to sleep he will be wakened up in the kitchen, where so many people come. I'll look in again about tea-time."

As she drove through the streets to her next patient, Helen sympathized with Louis's speechless annoyance at sending his patients home again to be thoroughly undone once more. She was wishing that civilian casualties could be managed as high-handedly and thoroughly as military casualties were during the war. Suddenly she was pulled up by a hoarse voice calling her name. Parmoor, the local butcher, was coming along in his high dog-cart; she had tried conclusions with him before because he was a prominent "public man" and Borough Councillor. As she drew her car up to see what he wanted, she stiffened as a dog scenting strife. But it was not strife this time.

"Ah've joost bin readin' th' *Comet's* account o' yo'r wash-houses, Dr. Clevion. What are yo' reckonin' to make out o' them?"

His shrewd red face was very earnest.

"I'm not a tradesman," said Helen, shortly, wishing she had been taught, when a child, how to be charming when she was cross. "I hope they'll pay their way."

"And yo' got 'em rent-free off Ruthers?" he said, incredulously. "Where did yo' get the rest o' th' money?"

"From my banker—in the usual way."

"More fool yo', doctor. But mind, Ah'm not saying as I don't think it's a darn good idee! A darn good idee! As a public man, I must say Ah congratulate yo'. An' the way you've carried it out is magnificent for a woman!"

"Thank you, Mr. Parmoor," she said, meekly.

He chuckled.

"There! Ah know as you're laughin' at me, Doctor Clevion. But Ah'd sooner see a pretty woman laugh nor cry any day, even if it is at John Parmoor her's laughin'. What Ah was goin' to say was this. If yo'r willing Ah'd like to propose at the Council Meetin' a Thursday that they make yo' Chairman o' the Housing Committee. Yo' know what it is. We boast as Shellpit's the most go-ahead place as here an' there one, but when it comes to this 'ere housin', blow me if we're any more go-ahead than London, or any o' them all-talk-an'-no-do places! But if it on'y took you three months for get Ruthers' old rat-holes fixed up, with limited money behind yo', it seems to me as yo're the one for get a move on this 'ere town plannin'—specially when yo've got public money for splash!"

She laughed outright at him.

"There you go again! Laughing at me! Better laugh at th' Housin' Committee. Fifteen houses in ten months!"

"I'm not an architect, and really—I'm horribly busy."

"Yo'd be a sight less busy if we 'ad decent 'ouses," he said, slyly. "At least, so your friend the editor o' the *Comet* says to-day."

"Oh, quite! Well, I'll think about it. And now I simply must run."

She smiled a little to herself to think how her exhibition of some small amount of business ability had won over to her side violently anti-feminist Parmoor, who had been one of her loudest-mouthed opponents in the beginning—on the ground that "women doctors was all right for confinements,

but let 'em realize that that's their proper sp'ere, an' not go pokin' their noses into men's business."

Her drive through the pestilent streets of Lower Shellpit to the surgery in Sharlock Street made her determined to accept the chairmanship of the Housing Committee if old Parmoor's influence on the Borough Council was strong enough to make them offer it to her; in the packed, small room that smelt of dirt and of illness she realized the hopelessness of patching people, and it seemed futile to go on, alleviating only immediate miseries as the tribe of patients followed one another. All the time the thought of Francis was a leaden weight pressing upon her, as she talked coolly, healingly to them. Two nights ago a woman had come to her with her cheek laid open by a blow from her husband's fist; she had obviously been drinking for some time. Now her husband came, his unshaven face greyish, his eyes staring and sunken with sleeplessness, his wrist red and swollen, his hand hanging sickeningly.

"I'm afraid it's broke, miss," he said, flinching when Helen's cool hand touched it. As she dealt with it he explained that he had been struggling with his wife and it had happened he could scarcely tell how.

"You hurt your wife dreadfully the other night," she said. "I had to put four stitches in her face. I really ought to have told the police, you know."

He sat helpless and hopeless on the edge of the chair, utterly dejected, his shoulders hunched, his mouth half open.

"I can't 'elp it, miss," he said humbly. "Yo' canna tell what our Emma is. I've had twelve years of her now, miss—her nagging and her singing out at me morning, noon an' night, and always on the booze when her got hold of a few ha'pence. On Monday when I come in, there was the house full up o' wet washin' and all Sunday's washin'-up on the sink. The kids was playin' 'ell—begging your pardon, miss. The babby was cryin' for 'is food, an' when I tuk him up for give him his bottle he was fair heavin' all over with dirt. It's same as if I canna put up with her any more, miss. Her come

in, then, and laughed because I was trying to wash the kid. An' so I up an' clocked her one."

"Doesn't seem to make things better, thumping people, does it, Harris? There, how does that feel?" she said, as she fixed his arm in a sling.

"It feels a treat, miss," he said gratefully. "Look here, miss, the Lord Himself 'ud fight our Emma. He would an' all. If her was shut up in hospital the doctors 'ud 'it her. It's when her voice keeps all on the same note I canna abide it, and then I feel as if something tells me to clip her over the jaw."

"Can't you go into another room?" she inquired, weakly.

"Other room? There's three rooms for the whole lot of us, her an' me an' four kids. I never was one for the pub, much. If I was in the habit o' boozin' I'd 'ave done 'er in afore this. But now it's same as if I'm drunk. I canna stand it. It's me or 'er for it."

"Listen to me, Harris. I'm going to give you some medicine that will make you feel less jumpy when she talks all on the same note. But can't I make you see that your poor wife is ill? Were you in hospital at all during the war?"

"Yes, miss—for a month at Boulogne. Best time o' me life, the army!"

"Did you see any soldiers with shell-shock?"

"Yes, poor devils!" he said, wondering what she was getting at.

"Well, your wife is just as ill as they were, really."

"Ill, miss? Her's bad—dirty, stinkin' wicked through an' through; that's our Emma for yo'."

"You would have thought those shell-shocked men were wicked if you had had to live with them. People whose brains and nerves are all raked up seem very wicked to those around them. Your wife has drunk a lot for some years; she's had those children, and lived in those wretched rooms with everything to try her temper. Oh, I know you've had a lot to put up with. But a man does get out to work, and sees other men to talk to. You were in the army, and out of

it for a year or two—— Oh, don't think I'm calling the army a picnic, Harris!"

He smiled faintly.

"The front line trenches was better than our show," he muttered.

"Well, it was a change, anyway. And she's had no change ever since she was married; unless she went to the public-house she was at home all day, with nothing but the housework and the children to think about. She has brooded; she has nothing to take her out of herself, as people say. We ought to send her away to a nursing home for three months—she wants a new set of thoughts and habits."

"But what could I do for th' kids? And who'd pay for 'er?" he asked, helplessly.

"I know all that, Harris, and I can't tell you how sorry I am for you. I know you're strained beyond endurance; I know it's impossible for you, with your nerves in the state they are in, to treat her gently; even a trained nurse would find her trying in a hospital, as you say. But we have to try to bear these things, haven't we? and mend them where we can. Look here, now—to-morrow's Saturday. Take this note and the four little ones with it along to Bethesda. They'll keep them there and give them tea, and bathe them for you. That will be something. And make up your mind not to speak to your wife except when it's absolutely necessary for a while. Couldn't you go to a football match? Or what would you say to the first house at the Hippodrome? Just for a change——"

He went off, taking his medicine, promising he would do his best.

"I feel as if it's me or her for it, miss," he repeated, at the door, his eyes tragic.

"Not a bit of it. An ordinary man would just, as you say, clock her one. But all this trouble you've had has made you more than an ordinary man, don't you think?"

And so they went on, tale after tale of vicious circles until she was glad when they had all gone, and Mrs. Winnocks came fussing in with her glass of malted milk.

"Have you bin to Bethesda to-day, ma'am?" she asked.

"No, I've been too busy. I shall go presently."

"They've never stopped going all day! I never thought they'd care that much about baths, but when they can get something on the cheap, it's like as if they can't help themselves. You'll have to take in Martin's Street entire if it goes on 'a' thisen."

That was something hopeful in the blackness. Later she went down past the Mission, and was reminded that she had promised to tell the Rector about Francis. Her head was aching, her eyes hot and burning, when she passed through the dusty street into the bright orderliness of Bethesda.

Mrs. Schlegel, flushed and hot, met her in the hall.

"Well, how is business, Mrs. Windsor?" asked Helen, pushing the headache away and smiling.

"We've been very busy all day, Dr. Clevion," said the girl. "I've hardly had time to think, yet. The soup gave out at dinner-time, and then all the jam and the tea were used up. I didn't quite know what to do, or where to find you, so I ordered some more from Shotford's on my own responsibility."

"Good! What a blessing to find someone with a responsibility!"

She opened the door of the tea-room: the tables were filled, and every available chair taken; there was a tremendous buzz of talk and clatter of cups and spoons from the women. As they saw Helen, several of them stood up to make room for her—a little attention that amazed as much as it touched her.

"I mustn't stay. I just looked in to see if anyone was here."

"I should think we was, miss," said a fat old woman whose damp apron, stained with blueing water, showed that she had come from a belated washtub. "You can't think what it is to walk out in your disabille and leave the blooming washing while you drink a cup of tea all put ready for you."

"You've never 'ad to work, doctor, else you'd know what a blessing it is to 'ave a bit o' waiting on," said another.

In the parlour half a dozen women sat; two were reading

novelettes, the rest were dozing. Mrs. Willis, out in the scullery, was washing cups and saucers and getting thoroughly flustered in her efforts to maintain the supply. Helen watched her from the door and listened as she became enthusiastic about the cups. She had never before in all her life been enthusiastic about anything but food and beer. . . .

Tea was in progress in the Rector's walled garden, underneath the few bleak trees on the lawn, but she felt she could not join the lynx-eyed group of Church ladies who were gathered round the Rector's wife and his eldest son, a young man who had just come down from Oxford with a fine reputation for sonneteering, a confirmed dislike of the lower classes; a firm belief in his chronic ill-health, fostered by the fact that he had been rejected for the army when called up as a conscript; a tremendous pride in his beautifully tended white hands, which he kept spread out on his quasi-clerical black knees; and a businesslike, quite unenthusiastic intention of taking Holy Orders. On the lawn a limp game of tennis was in progress.

But Helen was not to escape; the Rector, seeing her going towards the front door, came across the grass, blandly insistent, and she found herself sitting beside the Rector's son and receiving a lukewarm cup of straw-coloured tea.

"Such a pity you are late, my dear," said Mrs. Tappan, comfortably. "Perhaps one might get some more tea made——"

She looked doubtfully at the son.

"Please, no. I never drink tea," lied Helen glibly, and put down her cup on the grass. Young Tappan waited patiently until the interruption had subsided and went on, loudly and forensically:

"As I was saying—the greatest economic menace at the present moment is the Salvation Army. Its emotional religious appeal is to the very lowest; those whom it does not get emotionally it bribes with money and shelter, and then it floods the market with derelicts."

"Where is the economic menace in rescuing derelicts, whether they are rescued emotionally or by bribery?" asked Helen,

in a snapped voice. He looked astonished that she should have dared to question him.

"Derelicts such as the Salvation Army shelters will work for half the pay an ordinary workman can demand."

"Humph!" said Helen, standing up suddenly, conscious that if she stayed longer her manners would get even worse. "I want to talk to you, Mr. Tappan, privately."

She said good-bye to Mrs. Tappan and Miss Frayne, waved her hand to the three Rectory girls on the tennis lawn, nodded to the young man, who remained negligently seated, and stalked across the lawn in front of the Rector. As she went she could hear the group round Mrs. Tappan begin to discuss her and the Bath-house and the article in the *Comet* that had just arrived.

"Mr. Reay is ill," she said. "I've been trying to do something for him for a long time, and last night I took him along to the hospital to Dr. Farne."

"Dear, dear, dear! What, mental trouble?" asked the Rector, looking distressed.

Helen flushed hotly.

"It's a complete breakdown. He has been working at an appalling rate, and worrying dreadfully. I took him to Dr. Farne because—he is my friend, and Francis's friend, and he could look after him better there than in his rooms."

"I am truly sorry—truly! It is distressing to think how near he was to a breakdown when he—er—ah—or—took the noon Celebration last Sunday."

Helen tapped her foot impatiently.

"He has been near it for months. He is naturally anxious about the Mission."

"Oh, quite, quite—er—or—ah—quite, quite. I will get someone for the Mission. I was hoping to get away for a month next week, but if he is ill—— Most unfortunate, most! Is there anything I can do? Fruit—er—or—ah—jellies? Anything in my power——"

"No, really, Mr. Tappan—he's too ill yet, thank you."

"Could I see him if I go to the hospital?" he asked, earnestly.

"Oh no! He's to be kept absolutely quiet. Rest is what he needs most, and—if we can make him do as he is told—a change to some place where he will see neither a slum nor a church for a while."

"Dear, dear, dear. Most unfortunate! Are you in Mr. Reay's confidence, doctor? His complete confidence?"

"More or less," she said, wondering if Francis had overdrawn his salary, or something equally desperate.

"I—was thinking—of the financial question! Er—or—ah—if I could advance his stipend——" He broke off, looking awkwardly away. "The financial question is so unpleasant—except from the pulpit," he added, with a heavy smile.

Helen's heart warmed towards him a little.

"No. It's really awfully nice of you, Mr. Tappan, but there's no need to worry about that at all. As soon as he is well, we are going to be married——"

"Really? My dear young lady! I'm sure I congratulate Mr. Reay most heartily! Most! I suppose he will look higher than a curacy in Shellpit, then?"

"I don't think he could, do you? No—his work is here, and so is mine. But if you could find someone for six months, till he is quite well again—— Do you think you could?"

"Oh, yes, yes, yes—quite! Really, your news has quite astonished me!"

"Not more than it astonished me!" she said, with a laugh.

"I hope, my dear young lady," he said, pressing her hand with a fatherly grasp, "that you will allow me—er—or—ah—to officiate?"

She laughed again; the vision of Helen Clevion as a blushing bride was altogether too incongruous. But she nodded to the Rector, and he looked pleased.

"Are you thinking what an extraordinary clergyman's wife I shall make?" she asked, as they went across the lawn.

"You are certainly not—er—or—ah—average! But you genuinely have the Church's passion for souls."

"Not a bit of it! Bodies! I don't care tuppence for souls, Mr. Tappan!"

"Dear, dear, dear!" he said as they reached the gate together. "You should not say such uncomfortable things!"

"But think of it! Francis with that passion for souls, and I with an insatiable desire to cure bodies. What perfect specimens we shall dish up in Shellpit, shan't we?"

She sprang into the car, waved her hand to the Rector, who watched her up the street with a fatherly smile and a sense of discomfort, and then went back to tell the news at the tea-table. As Helen went down the hill again to see the Watkins baby, and up it again to several of her better-class patients in Upper Shellpit, her head was aching unbearably, and she was talking to herself as she often did when driving alone.

"What a game it all is—a futile, silly, kiddish game! Here am I actually raked up by a dense old man and a puppy who tries to be cynical! And I don't believe either of them is such a fool as I am, really! Bowled over by a stupid love affair!"

CHAPTER XIV

MEANWHILE Jacqueline, in her grey frock, her grey shoes and her impertinent little black hat with ospreys, was stepping daintily from the taxi that had taken her to the hospital. Walking elegantly over the gravelled path in the high heels that made walking difficult and dangerous, she asked for Dr. Farne. He looked tired as she was shown into his study. Through the door she could see him busy at his microscope. Slides and Jenners' phials with glass rods were on the table at his side. He came and sat down with her, and told her in a few words what he wanted.

"Will you go along and have tea with Nurse Barnes in Miriam House? I'll 'phone to her to ask her to introduce you to Mrs. Warner, and then you can study her. Of course, don't mention this little plot. You're awfully good at making people look charming, Mademoiselle. Just get a good look at her and see what you think she needs to make her very pretty, and then, if you'll be so awfully kind, I'll get you to order the things in the town."

Jacqueline was businesslike; she took a minute silver-cased pencil and an infinitesimal note-book to write down how much Louis wished her to spend; and when she saw his abysmal ignorance, she became coquettishly instructive.

After a while, when the interview seemed finished, he said:

"You look immensely better, Mademoiselle."

"I am bettaire, Monsieur," she said with a sigh.

"But not happy, eh?"

"I cannot forget, Monsieur. Mon Dieu, 'ow can I forget 'im?"

"But he isn't worth thinking about for one minute," he said; "you know that, don't you?"

"I know et, yes. Does any woman love only good, beautiful man?" she asked, pensively.

"No, I'm afraid they don't. But——"

"And w'at life I 'ave now!" she said, her small hands clasped together, her child's eyes lifted plaintively to him.

"But don't you like being with Dr. Clevion?" he asked, in surprise.

"I lov' Dr. Clevion, but 'ow I 'ate its life! I 'ate der Shellpeet, and all her dirty working class de people! I 'ate its dress and its *voix*. When Dr. Clevion are wit' me, I t'ink she are charming, and I shall be *contente*, *gentille* for 'er. When she go a-way, I t'ink, 'Jacqueline, you com' old soon—not find der man any more!' And Dr. Clevion mek me t'ink I nevaire want find man again. Las' week, I was bad; I mek chemise like May 'ave it—bee-utiful *crêpe de chine de noir*, wit' *mouche-guêpe* of orange and *rouge*. Dr. Clevion laugh, and say, *vaire gentille*, 'Jacqueline, you like best wear chemise de white—wit' leetl' pink rose.' I want mek my bad chemise in fire, den—but I keep it!"

Louis frowned. He felt the subject was getting rather difficult. Jacqueline looked at him, read his thoughts, and flushed.

"Voulez vous pardon me, Monsieur, for tell you about my linen? I cannot tell ordinaire person, but doctor and *prêtre* are not man—it are *docteur* and *prêtre* onlie!"

"Oh, quite," he said with a smile; "but I don't understand you. You love Dr. Clevion, and yet you don't like to be with her!"

"Two woman, Monsieur—w'at life!" she said, looking deprecatingly from beneath her lowered eyelids. "She are so quiet, so *gentille*. Always I know w'at she shall say; nevaire she grombling, and say, 'Jacqueline, I 'ate you!' and den we cry, and keess and lov' more! Clean woman *vaire* dull, like der Church! Dirty woman—oh, *très intéressante*! Like der Carnival! Always der same, my life now—not'ing of *risque*, not'ing of *aventure*. I like be clean woman like 'er, but she 'ave 'er work, and I 'ave not'ing eat me up! I want someone eat, *consume*!"

"And be eaten and swallowed up yourself?" he said, gently. "Eh, Mademoiselle?"

She shrugged her shoulders.

"For me not'ing mattaire. My life are *vaire triste*."

She stood watching him, waiting with an indescribable air of patient attention for what he would say next.

"I think if you went away from her, the doctor would be very sad, Jacqueline."

"She are stron' woman."

"Yes, but even a strong woman can't bear too many disappointments. I know she is very fond of you."

"She are *vaire* good for me, I know et. You t'ink she be miserabl' if I go?"

"I am sure of it."

"Den I stay."

When Helen came up, looking tired out, with white face and eyes dark in shadowy purple orbits, he mentioned casually that Jacqueline had been up, looking very well and very charming. But Helen had no thought for anything but Francis.

"You shall see him after dinner. He has slept all day."

"I can't eat, Louis," she said, throwing herself wearily on to the big chair on the verandah. "What time did he waken?"

"About five o'clock."

"Was he—did he seem—rational?"

"Well, of course, after chloral hydrate——" began Louis. She jerked out of the chair impatiently.

"Oh, I'm used to breaking news gently, and I know all the tricks," she reminded him. "You mean he didn't know you?"

"I didn't expect him to."

"He was violent?"

"What good does it do for you to ask?" he said, quickly; "you know I'll do my best."

"Yes, of course I do. But I won't be kept in the dark. Oh, isn't it damnable to know too much?" Into his refusal to answer her directly she had read all the horrors of dementia she had seen—the physical lack of control, the forcible feed-

ing to keep life in a body that refused to give it hospitality, the wearing, unwearying violence. Her white face went even whiter.

"Well, you know the worst, old girl. But you certainly know the best too. This won't last——"

She took courage from his calm.

She found herself eating, almost mechanically, as he talked; she even found herself growing indignant about the stress of the London hospitals, and the proposal to charge patients for admission. Then Louis left her and went up to the room where she had slept last night.

"He is asleep, Helen," he came back to say in a few minutes. "If he were not, I don't think I should allow you to see him. Probably it would only upset him again, yet."

She shivered to think that seeing her should hurt him—she could not bear that again, the disgust, the hate.

But he lay, with the golden September sunlight all about him, his eyes half open, his breath coming short and quick. A nurse who was sitting at the open window turned and nodded to Helen and then again looked through the window very obviously and fixedly. Helen wondered uninterestedly how much she had guessed, how much Nurse Walters had gossiped. Soon she entirely lost interest in the thought.

He was muttering inarticulately. Sometimes it seemed as if he wanted to move his hands, for there was a faint tremor of movement about the elbows, that was soon exhausted by helplessness. With a swift glance at Louis and the nurse, she bent down and touched his hand with her lips; his face, seen close to, without the glamour of the sunlight, was greyish; she had never before seen him unshaven. It would not have shocked her in a patient. In him it was ugly, unexpected.

"I hate to see him like this—so helpless," she whispered, tragically.

"It makes you understand why people get in such a state that they pray, doesn't it?" he said, as they went along the landing. "Come and have a smoke and a talk?"

She shook her head, unable to speak, and he let her go.

CHAPTER XV

LIFE went on in spite of tragedy and heart-break. Helen saw it as if it were a drama on a screen; she seemed detached from it—it was not even so real as a stage play; she seemed to see mouthings and gestures, but could hear nothing that explained them or made them coherent, and all the time the low undercurrent of tragedy went on like the mutter of a ground bass. Every time she went to the hospital in the course of her duties during the day, she was told that Francis was asleep; every evening—she dined with Louis always now, as a matter of course, after adjusting her hours at the surgery—he was genuinely asleep; she sat and watched him for a while each evening and then went slowly home through the damp darkness.

The Mission was closed for a while and the Sunday School children played in the streets on Sundays—that was the greatest difference his illness made. Now that the priest was gone, those who had brought their troubles to him did not go up the hill to the Rectory: they came to Bethesda, which they somehow associated with him, and, not finding Helen there, followed her to Sharlock Street. For his sake she tried to cope with them all.

Bethesda was certainly a success; it was busy from the moment of opening until the people were implored out at ten o'clock. Extra helpers had to be engaged, and the end of the month, when Helen and Miss Wembley went painstakingly through accounts, showed that it was quite satisfactorily paying its way.

A few sinister things happened, but passed in the press of more important things: once when she left her car outside a patient's house in Ruthers' Row—believing, as she had found in London, that a doctor is as safe as a priest or a nun—every

tire was ripped when she came out, and she guessed that sympathizers with the Derrys had done it. But she made no attempt to prosecute, or even to accuse them of it, believing that they would soon weary of venting their petty spite. Another time, on her rounds, she was pursued by a disgusting smell and, reaching under the seat for her bag, put her hand on a dead cat—a heaving, reeking mass of decay. And twice, as she came from the hospital late at night, stones were thrown at her, one narrowly missing her head, the other smashing her wind-screen. After that her unknown enemies suspended their activities and she went in peace.

The following week saw her elected Chairman of the Housing Committee—old Freddy Williams, the ancient solicitor, retiring gracefully and gratefully. Parmoor, the butcher, Mr. Tappan and the editor of the *Comet* were enthusiastic supporters: the rest were cannily neutral until they saw what she was going to do. She went about with a strange effect of dual personality. To the Housing Committee she delivered a rousing speech that was referred to in the leading articles of a few London papers as a sane and practical way out of the housing problem which, according to Helen, was at the root of every social evil. Yet that night, when she was being chaffed by Louis on her appearance as a public character, she astonished and shocked him by bursting into tears.

“What’s the matter? Have I offended you?” he asked, anxiously.

“No, of course you haven’t,” she said, turning away.

“Well then—why?”

“Oh, Louis, it’s so abominably lonely!”

She found her handkerchief and dabbed her face roughly.

“Of course it’s lonely,” he said. “It’s *got* to be lonely. If you deliberately choose the big thing, it isolates you. The saints found that out—it was literally ‘leave all,’ wasn’t it?”

“I suppose so—only—it doesn’t seem necessary, somehow.”

“Scientists have always found it necessary. Their very quality of mind isolates them. Of course, if you want the nice pleasant things of life—success, home, friends, love—well, you must give up the wide thing.”

"I can't help thinking how keen he would have been—this housing—you know——" she said, choking again.

"Yes, I know. But his not being here to understand doesn't hurt the work, old girl; it just hurts you. And you've got to put up with it."

"Oh, it's so easy to talk. You're here like a statue, and nothing seems to hurt you."

"Good Lord! Do I give you that impression?" he asked, in surprise.

"Well, does it?"

"Oh, no! I have a perfectly riotous time of it! Why, if it weren't for you, I tell you I'd feel like sitting here and howling like hell sometimes! Yelling out, from sheer loneliness, as I should imagine Robinson Crusoe wanted to—just for the sake of hearing someone speak! Of course we're lonely! If we weren't we wouldn't be a scrap of use in our particular jobs!"

They sat for a long while talking, as the darkness grew round the hospital. It was surprising, and certainly reassuring, to her to think that Louis, who always seemed so uncannily restrained, wanted to "yell out," to "howl like hell." It made him more human to her. In the distance the flare of the streets showed the extra lights for the Saturday night marketers. Helen was glad it was Saturday—she was feeling worn out and had promised herself not to do anything but urgent work all next day.

"What's that bird they catch and imprison and then blind in order to make it sing better?" asked Louis, between puffs of his cigarette.

"Don't know—never heard of it," she answered.

"That's how we are—pieces cut off us, uses and processes of our souls and bodies diverted. Lord, w'at life, as Mlle. Rousseau says!"

"Oh, don't get cynical. I'm going home to bed," she said, standing up. At that moment the telephone bell in the hall rang. A maid came in to say that Dr. Clevion was wanted down in Sharlock Street.

"A woman named Harris," said the girl. "It's rather urgent."

"Oh, I know," said Helen, as the maid went to order her car round. "I'm worried about those Harrises.* They've been scrapping for weeks. I stitched up her face and put his broken wrist in splints. It's mostly the woman's fault—drink, nagging, dirt—he's had a dozen years of it and his nerves are all in rags. As Craig says, these people drift to crime and insanity because there's nowhere to put them when they're exhausted."

There was no time for more. He was struck by her weariness as he saw her into the car.

"Hold on a minute. I'll just 'phone to two of the houses, and then I'll come with you," he said suddenly.

She shook her head.

"No use, Louis. This'll be a surgeon's job. I feel it in my bones. They don't give a psychologist a look in, and then a surgeon has to start patching. Good-bye. If you should happen to want to howl like hell, there's the telephone to howl into—568 Shellpit."

She did not hear his answer, and forgot him as she drove recklessly over the moorland road until she came to the lighted streets, filled with Saturday night crowds, and thence into the darker ways and difficult roads of Lower Shellpit.

Sharlock Street seethed with people, all talking at once. Even the public-houses had failed to attract, and the reek from the fried-fish shops billowed out in vain. Round the little cottage that the Harrises shared with another family, the crowd was thickest. By the door stood a policeman. Inside two frightened children were screaming.

"Bad job, doctor," said the policeman, as the car made a way through the people and Helen sprang out, grabbing for her bag.

"More fighting?" she asked, diving into the house, whose atmosphere met her as something tangibly hot and foul.

"Worse than that, I'm afraid, doctor," answered the policeman, following her and barring the door. "I'm only waiting for

the sergeant; Harris is in the kitchen with her. He makes no attempt to get away."

Her heart sank with pity for Harris, and as she opened the door his eyes, dumb, tormented, haunted, were the first things on which she focussed hers. Then she saw the broken, splashed walls patched with paper, the filthy floor, the table covered with dirty, smashed crockery on which a poker had been thrown violently. A few greasy papers from which the children had eaten fried potatoes were on the broken sofa. Then she saw the roaring fire in the rusty, broken range. On the hearth, a great splash of blood dragged her attention. It had run into the ashes, a great, sickening pool of it; the woman's frowsy hair was dabbled in it, her face lying soaked in it as though she were trying to reach it with her mouth.

"I done it, miss," Harris was muttering. "I clocked her one."

Helen was bending over the woman. She was dead, her bloated dirty face was greying horribly except where the glare from the fire caught and reddened it. The little boy on the couch sat huddled, screaming thinly; his throat was almost too worn out with all the terror he had seen, and screamed at for half an hour, to make himself heard any longer. The baby, terrified by her haunted father and her mother lying on the ground, whimpered mournfully. Suddenly Helen looked up.

"Take those children away," she said quietly, to the constable. "Take them along to Bethesda and ask Mrs. Windsor to look after them till I can decide what can be done with them."

"I can't very well leave you with him, miss," said the policeman.

"I wanna hurt th' doctor," muttered Harris.

"Of course you won't, Harris," she said, gently.

The policeman took the baby in his arms, speaking gently to her when she screamed at his uniform. With a few twists and turns Helen made her a doll out of a piece of the unneeded bandaging in her bag, and the baby stopped crying.

"Come on, son, let's see if the toffee-shop's open," said the policeman, taking the thin, grimy hand of the boy in his.

"I want me dad-da," croaked the boy.

"Dad-da 'll be all right, son. You come alonger me," said the policeman, soothingly.

"Here's a penny, mate—go an' buy a toffee apple," said the father, dully.

The child went out, crying spiritlessly, with his father's penny clutched in his hot little hand.

"Will you help me lift her away from the fire?" asked Helen, in as matter-of-fact a tone of voice as possible.

He took no notice, but sat still, his arms hanging limp.

"It was her voice, miss—her kep' on raughtin' at me."

Helen pushed the table aside and, dragging the dead woman by her feet, moved her so that she could be shielded from the fire.

"You've killed her, Harris," she said.

"Look at this place and the kids, miss—four quid a week comin' in reg'lar! I couldna abide another Sunday wi' her tongue clackin' in me ears——"

"How did it happen?" she asked, with an altogether unprofessional conviction that she would cry for the second time that evening unless she was very stern with herself.

"I come 'ome. All this week I've bin workin' overtime, an' got a bit worked up, not havin' proper sleep. Her were asleep on the sofy when I come in, an' no dinner ready. Then we 'ad words, and her went off to th' 'Sun.' It's same as if I hadn't any patience left, miss——"

His voice died away, and she heard him muttering about his "old mother."

"I went and fatched her out o' th' 'Sun,' and I got on to her because the place was that dirty, an' no dinner ready—and her raught at me. So I caught her a clip aside the head——"

The front door banged softly; the heavy steps of two policemen could be heard coming along the passage. Upstairs one of the lodgers began to shriek in a fit of hysterics.

"Her were top'eavy wi' drink, miss, and went over. And

'er looked that vulgar, layin' there grittin' her teeth and kickin' her legs up, I up with the carvin' knife an' cut 'er throat."

Helen turned to the sergeant.

"What are you going to do with him?" she whispered. "He ought to be in hospital. She's nearly driven him mad, you know."

"I'll have to lock him up, doctor."

Helen shuddered.

"Oh, how devilish we are!" she said, and added, as impressively as she could: "He'll go mad if he doesn't have something to quieten him. If I make some medicine to quieten him and get him to sleep, will he be allowed to take it?"

"I'll see that he does, doctor," whispered the sergeant, "but it won't do to let it get known."

Harris stood up wearily.

"I done it, sergeant," he said, dully; "I stopped her clack, that's one good job—twelve years of it, raughtin' at me——"

He looked at her, as two other policemen stooped to carry her to a waiting ambulance through the crowd of people outside.

"Not worth swinging for—blow me if she is! Dirty lump o' fat an' booze."

"You won't swing, Harris," said Helen, watching him with clouded eyes as he gave one glance round his home and went out without another word. He was shaking so violently that he could scarcely walk; the two constables supported him with friendly hands. Helen followed them, and noticed how he shrank at the sight of all his neighbours, all of whom, though sympathetic, wanted to gloat curiously over every detail of the tragedy.

He turned away, swaying along the pavement.

Helen touched the sergeant's arm.

"There's nothing I can do here. Put him in the car. I'll run you up to the police station," she said, softly. The dazed man was helped in, almost unconscious of where he was. The crowd outside veered hungrily towards the ambulance. They wanted to see the blood.

"What can you expect?" she said disgustedly to the constable who climbed up beside her. "They're trained, from Sunday School, to wallow in blood."

The constable stared at her.

At the inquest Helen said that for some weeks she had considered Harris to be on the verge of complete breakdown; she described what she had seen of his home.

"Do you mean to imply, doctor," asked the coroner, who was a lawyer, "that you would certify the man as insane?"

Helen answered slowly and guardedly: she had talked it all out with Louis beforehand.

"I certainly think that, if he had another such month to go through as I have seen him enduring, he would inevitably have to be certified insane. On the other hand, if he had not had the experience of marriage he has had for twelve years, he would be as sane as you or any other man. His conditions have acted upon him in practically the same way as an intense bombardment acted upon some of the soldiers who are still in neurological hospitals. His life has, in effect, been an intense bombardment."

"You put his nervous crisis down entirely to his wife?" said the coroner.

"No, not entirely. The actual, acute disaster happened through his wife, certainly. But in both his case and hers the trouble was chronic. Their home was largely to blame. She lost heart, became vicious and took to drink; he fought on without drink or anything. She felt things less keenly because her brain and body were both degenerate with alcohol. He, being very much more sensitive, lost control more suddenly and completely than she, who had never been controlled."

The jury asked many more questions and brought in a verdict of "Manslaughter, with strong recommendation to mercy on account of great provocation." Later, at the Assizes, Harris was sentenced to two years' imprisonment. There was much discussion in the *Comet*, and again in some of the London papers; Helen, being a housing enthusiast, was accused of log-rolling. But a famous Harley Street psychologist wrote a letter to the *Times* saying that Helen was right; he believed

that practically one-half the population of England, since the war, was suffering from neurasthenia, which had, until the war, been the rich man's disease. "England is being slowly—and not *very* slowly—driven to mental and nervous instability," he wrote. "If all the people who need drastic and radical nervous and mental treatment to-day were taken from their homes and occupations, it is not stretching it to say that half our industries and more than half our professions would be paralyzed, while every hospital, military, civilian, isolation and private, would not accommodate more than half of them. Dr. Clevion is quite right; people are being driven to a loss of control by the acute discomfort of their lives. For the rich in such cases are Weir Mitchell and all sorts of Homes; for the poor there is nothing until they drift into insanity and have to be taken in hand like this man Harris."

While the Harris case had been on, Mrs. Schlegel had kept the four children at Bethesda. They slept in the crèche cots, and Helen sent a camp bed in so that Mrs. Schlegel might sleep with them. Helen went to see Harris and suggested that his children should be sent to a Home while he was away. He seemed hopeful and to Helen, to whom he dared to be honest, quite unrepentant.

"I'm glad I put her out, doctor," he said, with a glance at the door of his cell, with its little square hole through which the warder looked sometimes. "I've had time to think about it all."

"You have? Well, then, I'd leave it if I were you, and think only of the future."

"There'd have bin no future if I hadn't have put her out, doctor. But sometimes, o' nights, I canna help thinkin' of when we was courtin', and when we was first married, afore things got too much for 'er. But it was me or 'er for it, an' the kids too."

"Well, they'll be safe now," said Helen, "and when you come back we'll see that things start better."

One of the children went to live in Warwickshire with Harris's sister; Helen wrote to Dr. Barnardo's Homes about the other three, explaining their circumstances, and they were

admitted to the Homes until their father could look after them again. On the day that a Barnardo official came to Bethesda to take them to London, Helen found time to buy them new clothes and take them in her car—to them a thing of wonder—to the station. Mrs. Schlegel cried when she parted from them; she looked very white and weary that evening, and Helen remembered that she would be going back to her wretched room up the street.

“I wonder if you would like to sleep here?” she asked suddenly. “I have a few spare things at home we could put into the little room over the front door—that is, if you’re not frightened of being alone here at nights.”

“There’s nothing I’d like better, Dr. Clevion,” said the girl. “And it will save me seven shillings, besides. But I shall miss the children very much.”

Helen was reminded of Mrs. Schlegel’s own baby, and it occurred to her to suggest that he might be brought from his moorland home now, to live with her for a while; but at that moment one of her incessant calls came, and she forgot it in the press of her work.

As time passed Helen grasped more and more what Louis had meant when he spoke of the intact isolation of those who went out after the wide things of life. Friends she found in plenty with whom she could make pleasant surface intimacies; the Rectory girls rather tended to gush about her, and the editor’s canny worldliness and naïve appreciation were very delightful. Interests she found, apart from her professional work: the Housing Committee was fascinating, and the fights it brought were enjoyable and stimulating. Bethesda, too, was something worth while. But they were all of them the wide, ungraspable thing, the “new earth”—and she had not yet learnt to hug her loneliness and wear it as a cloak and a glory. Later in the day she mentioned it to Louis.

“You know, for years I’ve prided myself on standing alone, being independent of anything anyone says or does or thinks. Yet I’ve been grouching most unchristianly since Francis was ill. I feel so utterly alone. I know I’m being a selfish pig, really; I’m much luckier than most. I have you, for instance.”

"Yes, but I understand that loneliness. I have you, too, old girl. But Lord, talk about loneliness! Like the Garden of Eden before Eve got into it. We're both of us built to need intimate love as well as friendship; my wife's dead; your man is—here. And there we are!"

He looked at her; there was nothing she could say, so she went on with her own thought.

"When I was in Wynin's to-day I happened to see the Wells's *History*—have you seen it? The Christianity number?"

"Um—we have it in the school; fierce discussions! Does 'em no end of good!"

"Well, it sounds perhaps awfully self-conscious, but it quite bucked me up! I mean—thinking that someone else had been isolated. It does buck you up when you realize you're not the only one, doesn't it?"

"Rather!"

"I got the idea of what it must have been like to die alone; just with two thieves, in a red twilight of pain. I've always wondered what Christ meant about God having forsaken Him, but I can see it now—that appalling loneliness. And I've always prided myself on standing up straight——"

He made no answer, and she looked at him in surprise. His next words seemed irrelevant.

"What did you think of him last night?" he asked.

She turned on him fiercely.

"How can I tell?" she said, passionately. "He is always asleep. You know better than I. I'm only a surgeon. Louis, it's your doing—his always being asleep, isn't it?"

"Yes," he said gently. "I couldn't risk your seeing him before. He—he has been out a little the last three days; to-night he is not asleep, and you can go and talk to him if you like."

"Louis! He's better?" she gasped, starting up. "You never said so!"

"I'm afraid he won't know you."

She caught her breath sharply.

"Why—does he know you? Only two months—to forget so soon!"

"No, he doesn't know me. He had tea with me to-day."

She tried to read his face. It was kindly and inscrutable.

"Come and see him. It is possible that he may know you. But I don't think he will."

She was already at the door.

"He isn't upstairs now. I have had the big room and the little room next to my study cleared for him. He likes them, I think."

She went along the passages impulsively, hurriedly, but at the door she paused, waiting for him. He opened it and went in.

The room was soft with shadows as the leaping lights of the pine logs blazing in the open grate spurted and crackled. Outside the uncurtained window the after-glow of the late October sunset was being ousted by lowering black clouds that lay in flat striations across the sky. She never forgot that sunset: it matched strangely with that angry red twilight about Calvary that she had read about at lunch. And his face, thin, queerly unfamiliar and much older with the two months' beard so much more noticeable now that he was awake, was silhouetted against the anger of the sky. He was sitting in a big chair by the fire, leaning back restfully, his eyes on the flickering shadows. The nurse went silent-footed through the other doorway as Helen and Louis entered, and Francis looked across at them with a smile.

"I've brought you a visitor, Reay," said Louis, speaking slowly.

Francis stood up, extraordinarily tall and thin in his dark dressing-gown coloured a deep purple by the flames.

"That's very kind of you," he said. "So many people come here to me."

Helen caught back a sighing breath; he looked at her with engaging friendliness, and, with a proud sort of gesture, indicated chairs for them, looking round as he did so.

"They come and go, these friends of mine. It is very kind of you," he repeated. "Can I—help you in any way?"

"Francis!" she whispered, glancing anxiously at Louis as she spoke.

He looked at her, knitting his brows as though he were trying to remember.

"That name has very beautiful memories for me," he said. "One day there came a little poor woman, asking alms—and there was nothing—Francis had given all." His head sank on his chest, as he looked dreaming into the fire.

"Francis!" whispered Helen again.

He looked at her and smiled; his hand, resting on his knee, moved, feeling the soft texture of the stuff of his dressing-gown. He took it between finger and thumb, regarding its warm purple in the fire glow. Then he felt the collar anxiously, passing his hand to the back of his neck.

"Purple and fine linen—little sister sheep!" he said, the troubled line appearing on his forehead. "But he gave his cowl—he gave all."

"He doesn't know me," she said, with pained eyes turned to Louis, who shook his head; then she caught her breath with a short, unhappy laugh at the obviousness of her words. Francis had turned from her and was holding his hands, thin, almost transparent, to the blaze. He looked at them suddenly, at the palms outspread on his knee.

"You called me Francis? The glorious little poor man of God! Did you know him?" he asked, turning sharply to Louis.

"Not very well," said Louis; "not so well as you, I expect."

"No. The Lord had very great honour for Francis. His hands were sealed—they bore the stigmata of Christ."

Louis stood up and, holding out his hand, gently drew Helen to her feet.

"He talks like this for hours," he said, softly. "You can see—he has forgotten——"

"Forgotten!" echoed Francis, standing up; then, with his head bent in order to look earnestly into Helen's face: "Forgotten! There was a message—he touched my lips, with coals from his altar—but I have forgotten."

"Next time you will remember, Francis," she said, controlling

her voice with incredible effort. "May I come again to see if you do?"

"That will be kind of you. My message—to guide their feet into the ways of peace—the kings and counsellors of the earth——"

"Nurse," called Louis. She appeared instantly. "He has been up quite long enough."

She nodded comprehension.

"I'll come again," said Helen, looking at Francis with tenderness.

"They go empty away," he said distressfully to the nurse; "I cannot remember."

He turned away, shaking his head, and looked out at the darkening sky. The door closed softly and in silence they went to the study.

As he closed the door she stood with her hands behind her, clutching the table. Her eyes were wide and starry with misery as she turned on him and said, in a low, urgent voice:

"Now what is it you're keeping from me?"

"I'm not going to keep anything from you any more. I wanted to be quite sure. Helen, do sit down, will you?"

She sat down, for her knees were shaking. He took the chair opposite her and spoke rapidly; he knew the horror of prosiness to an agonized listener.

"I thought at first it was nervous exhaustion, and, perhaps, a little religious mania. Those persecution delusions rather led me to something else—then I got puzzled, so I hunted up his family history. It wasn't easy. There was only the old aunt you mentioned available."

"How did they die?" she asked, with terrible quietness.

"Of his mother I couldn't learn much: only the usual vague 'nerve trouble'; she was what the aunt calls 'queer.' She put Francis into the Church, and lived with him absolutely alone; she never let him speak to a girl. His father—it was locomotor ataxy: and his grandfather—the old aunt said he was a 'very fast' man, whatever that may imply. He committed suicide——"

"O-h!" she breathed sharply. Then: "Go on."

"You see, he had other than purely religious reasons for not wanting to marry you, old girl. I suppose it was some idea about the Mosaic law of the third and fourth generation."

"But why couldn't he have told me?" she cried.

There was a long, blank silence.

"Do you think I was to blame for it, Louis?" she asked. Then, very low: "I don't want kind lies. Ah, no, I know you're not fool enough to lie to me."

"I am quite sure you were not to blame. The emotional disturbance you caused brought matters to a crisis, of course. But it was inevitable."

"How am I to know?" she cried, suddenly losing her aggressive control.

"I told you before, and you know yourself, that the harm you did was curable; it was just functional. But"—he waved his hand towards the laboratory door—"I can show you if you like—blood tests—and other things; it is organic trouble, deep-seated."

"And it will be progressive?" she whispered, her face buried in her hands.

"You can answer that as well as I. He is quite happy. The strife is over: he is at harmony. He has that to thank you for, at least. At present, except for the effort to remember his visionary message, he has not a care in the world. In time that also will pass. I was anxious to see what effect you had on him to-night; it gauged the extent of the trouble, to some extent. And as you saw, you were just one of a crowd of disciples who come for his message. Usually he is Francis; sometimes his state is kingly; sometimes he is in blank despair. I suppose he will be Christ before long; they usually get to that."

"Yes," she said slowly, and sat quiet. After a long time she broke out: "I oughtn't to have loved him, you know, ought I?"

"You couldn't help it, though."

She shook her head.

"I ought to have helped it; bursting in on his loneliness like

that! Louis, I ought not to have done it. Doesn't it seem to you there's something rough and rude in it?"

"I can't see you rough and rude, old girl."

"But bringing all that raging, narrow business of sex to a man who was out for the wide thing! I wish——"

She sighed, and he went into the laboratory to leave her alone. After a while she followed him to the door, and looked in.

"I'm going home," she said. "You know, people don't realize it, Louis, but—everybody like Francis, who is trying to make a new earth—they come sooner or later to that red angry twilight on a bleak hillside, all alone with pain and weakness, don't they? And people ought not to burst in and interrupt them."

He came back towards her, and went over to the fire.

"I don't think I'd go yet," he said.

"I must—I want to be alone," she said, in a thin voice. "Oh, Louis, I wanted to mother him—to take care of him as well as to love him . . . you know I did, don't you?"

"I know . . . I know . . ." he said. But she hurried away from the kindness in his eyes though a minute before she had sought it.

CHAPTER XVI

THE red twilight settled down upon her life, then; red only in flashes between dark and angry striations of her sky. She began to feel desperately tired. She prescribed herself a strong tonic which, after a week, made her impatient of its inadequacy. She told herself that the tiredness was spiritual and not physical, and kept doggedly on.

Most evenings, when her work was done, she talked to Francis: he was very gentle, never coherent, and he seemed to grow thinner every day. Sometimes she was his disciple, and he her teacher: sometimes he excused himself for having forgotten his message for her: sometimes he rebuked her gently, exhorted her passionately to something he never explained. One evening, standing by the window, he looked to where, down on the moor, the great arc-lamps swung whitely, lighting up skeleton buildings, with all the buzz of the men who went about making New Shellpit.

"The lights are very beautiful," he said. "Look at them."

"Yes, I came through just now. By Christmas we shall have some of the people in—out of Lower Shellpit. A Garden City for a slum!"

"A city?—that is at unity in itself. Thither the tribes go up," he said, pensively, gazing at the white glare, and then at the sky over Napoli, all ruddied from the forge.

She wondered if he could grasp everyday facts.

"There is a bath in every house, Francis—remember how keen we always were about baths? And one house in every twelve has a great playroom for the kiddies."

"How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of them that bring good tidings in Zion!" he said, turning to her. "Feet pierced—good tidings of great joy—to men of goodwill!"

"Very beautiful," murmured Helen, feeling a little sick.

"Wounded for our transgressions," he whispered.

He spoke often of St. Francis, and of how his contemplation of the wounds of Christ had sealed them on his own body. She could do nothing but agree with his words, for she could see that he was impenetrable to anything she could say now.

Scenes like this were the lowering clouds; in Lower Shellpit came the flashes of angry red. An epidemic of influenza visited the town: the death-rate was alarming, especially among the young, the old and the hard workers. She went about her work, almost driving herself to a standstill and sleeping badly because, when bedtime came, she was too tired to sleep and too sane to seek any of the narcotics that were to her hand in her dispensary. One day, when the rush of patients had been unusually large, and the people, who, missing Francis in their troubles, turned to her, had kept her more than an hour past her time, Mrs. Willis came. As Helen saw her flushed face her heart sank. She was not feeling in the mood to help failures just then. But a glance at the woman's face told her that, whatever was the matter, she had not been drinking.

"I thought as I'd best come here and speak to you private, mum," she said, mysteriously.

She sank heavily into a chair, an extraordinary picture of injured righteousness, nodding fiercely to herself till all the jet bugles on her bonnet jangled. Helen reflected that there is no saint so aggressively righteous as the thoroughly bad redeemed sinner.

"What's the matter? Those unfortunate cups?" asked Helen, with a not very cordial smile. "Collingtons have promised me a hundred this week."

"Cups! No, mum—and though I'm the last to blame a woman for having a bit o' fun when her can, I dunna see why yo' shud 'ave your name blackened by a lot of blooming Germans."

"Whatever do you mean?" asked Helen. She could think of no Germans in Shellpit.

"That there young Mrs. 'Un—calls herself Windsor, indeed!" she began.

"Oh, that! Why, I told her to call herself Windsor," said Helen quickly. "It saved a lot of explanations."

"Yes," said Mrs. Willis; "well, perhaps yo' did, mum. But yo' didna tell her for go off boozin' every night, and leave me to do all the work, did yo', now?"

"But does she do that?"

"As sure as I'm sitting here! Every night, safe as a wet washin' day, off her goes at six when Mrs. Ruddock comes on duty. All dressed up an' nowhere to go, I don't think! In all them low-class pubs down Sharlock Street and Sun Street, letting fellows treat her."

Mrs. Willis looked appallingly virtuous. Helen did not know whether to be sickened by her airy disregard for her own past, or rejoiced at the regenerate depth of her virtuous indignation.

"I don't say as I havena bin i' pubs in me time, mum," she went on, "but I hope I knew what was due to me as a married woman better nor that piece o' goods does. Her's a nowt, an' that's about it! Takin' presents off of fellows."

"I'll have a talk with her," said Helen, gently. "Don't say anything to her. We must remember how lonely she is, without husband or child. I expect it's a little tempting to her to seek friends."

"I dunna see why her should look for tortoiseshell combs, all set wi' little green stones—cost a mint o' money, I know!—into the barg'in. You know as well as I do, mum, young fellows don't give young women tortoiseshell combs wi' green di'monds for nothing."

"Well, I'll see her about it. I expect there's some explanation not nearly so bad as we think," she said.

Mrs. Willis departed, sniffing. Helen had a vision of the Willis home as she had first seen it that Easter Sunday morning.

That afternoon she went to see Mrs. Schlegel, but the place was full of people and the girl so busy that speech with her was impossible. She could not help noticing the rather Spanish-looking comb that certainly looked charming in Mrs. Schlegel's beautiful hair, and the pretty new black dress and dainty little

pinafore she was wearing. She guessed that the charm of her appearance was largely the cause of Mrs. Willis's virtuous indignation. But next day she had a letter from Miss Wembley saying that there was gossip going on about Mrs. Schlegel, who had been seen going into public-houses with men—and what did the doctor think she had better do about it? Impulse urged Helen to write back: "Mind your own business—the girl is grown up." But when she met Miss Wembley in the street later in the day the latter was so genuinely and charitably concerned for the sinner that she could not be rude.

"I feel that I am to blame. I meant to let her have a week with the baby. You know she is without an anchor, and she has been working very hard," said Helen.

"Yes, I know. But surely she need not go back to immorality?" asked Miss Wembley, flushing delicately.

"It's so much a question of degree and circumstance, isn't it? Poor little thing—she has to buy her pleasures pretty dearly! You and I, if a man gave us pretty ornaments, wouldn't be talked about, would we? And we can go among our men-folk without danger, which is more than girls like Mrs. Schlegel can."

Suddenly doctor and one-time patient looked into each other's eyes, and looked away again quickly. Then—

"You're too easy on people, doctor," said Miss Wembley.

"Not a bit of it; you can't be hard on people when you understand them."

Once more she determined to speak to Mrs. Schlegel, and suggest to her a holiday; once more pressing work prevented her, together with an unbearable tiredness that sent her to bed at the earliest moment every night. But one evening she was called out to a case in Martin's Street and was compelled to spend some hours in a small, hot bedroom with her patient and a midwife. At two o'clock she went out into the silent street for a breath of fresh air to combat her faintness; standing there in the velvety darkness, she listened to the throbbings of the engines in the forges and the pits. They seemed things heard in a dream—a dream no skill could analyze. She was turning back into the room, to its heat and its unstifled cries

of pain ungallantly borne, and the garrulity of a midwife who was incompetent and trying to hide her ignorance by talk, when she became aware of a shaded candle being carried from room to room in the Bath-house, until it glimmered faintly over the fanlight. She waited an instant, scarcely conscious of interest. Very stealthily the door opened and two figures stood on the step. They melted together an instant, and then a man went slinking up the street as the door closed softly, and the bolt grated home. The candle began its shadowy ascent of the stairs.

Helen returned to her patient; the fresh night air seemed more heavy and oppressive than the stuffy bedroom. After a few minutes, feeling that the woman would not be in need of her for half an hour, she told the midwife that she was going across to Bethesda. Without thinking out a plan of action, she ran across the road in the darkness. The candle was still burning in the upper room; she tapped gently on the door. For a while there was no response; then Mrs. Schlegel came, pattering in bare feet.

"You shouldn't have come back," she whispered, as she opened the door. "There's a confinement across the road—they may be sending for her."

"They have sent for her, Mrs. Schlegel," said Helen, quietly.

The girl dropped backwards. Having closed the door gently behind her, Helen faced her. Mrs. Schlegel was leaning against the wall, her nightdress, which was without a button, caught tightly about her in her trembling hand.

"I—I—had to send for a man to do the hot-water pipes—he was late," she stammered.

"Do you usually kiss plumbers at the front door in your nightgown in the middle of the night, Mrs. Schlegel? Don't lie to me."

"I—I'm not," began the girl, sobbing.

"Oh, don't treat me as if I'm a judge or a warder!" cried Helen, impatiently. "If you can't look upon me as your friend, can't you remember that I'm a doctor? What made you do it?"

Leaning against the wall, the girl tried to bury her face

in the scanty sleeve of the cheap, ready-made nightgown. Helen watched her patiently, and caught the word "lonely" that sent a responsive stab to her own heart.

"They tell me you go drinking with men."

"I only—to pass an hour——" began Mrs. Schlegel. "At my age you want to see a bit of life."

"But the sort of life you see in public-houses! You know, you're awfully pretty! I often take a peep into Bethesda just on purpose to see you, because it cheers me up."

The girl was sobbing bitterly now.

"I'd just love to take you to London to see one of the Italian Madonnas in the National Gallery! You're exactly like her! And to imagine you in a public-house with nasty young men—getting fat and flabby like poor Mrs. Willis—as you certainly will if you drink."

"It isn't that I drink much, Dr. Clevion," cried the girl. "It's only for company. When a fellow asks you to go for a walk, it's safer to be in pubs."

Helen felt unable to answer this argument.

"You don't know how it is—you've got friends, and you've got a nice home."

"I know, my dear girl—I know. But——"

"It's easy to talk, Dr. Clevion; if you only knew what I've been through since Herman went back."

"I do know," said Helen again, wishing very much for a sudden access of wisdom. "But that doesn't excuse what happened to-night."

"You don't understand! You're in a different class of life to me! You get that lonely, and a fellow comes along and makes a fuss of you; they give you little bits of things and you get to look forward to seeing them again. Then they let out what it is they're after. Fellows only want one thing."

"Is he in love with you?" Helen asked, sharply.

The girl shrugged her shoulders indifferently.

"I don't know. There's not many fellows would take on a girl who's got a German child and another that come by mistake. But I can't help it."

"I think I'd try very hard," suggested Helen. "To-morrow

you must go away and have a month with baby. You've been a brick since we started here, and you're tired out. Then I'll try to find a room where you can bring him to live with you."

The girl shook her head hopelessly.

"What's the matter?"

"You're very kind to me, Dr. Clevion, but I'm fed up. After you've once done wrong, everybody's throwing stones at you."

"I don't," she reminded her.

"No, but you're the only one of your sort on earth, I believe. Anyway, every fellow I meet thinks I'm anybody's money now. Besides—what's the use of me lying to you? You know people inside out, somehow. I'm one of those who likes a fellow about me."

Helen shivered. The woman across the road "liked a man about her" and was the mother of eight unkempt children, wife of a sickened husband. Half an hour ago she had groaned, between uncontrolled shrieks of pain, "Never no more, doctor—I've done with this job for the rest of me life," and Helen had reflected, cheerlessly, that they all said that.

"You will get your divorce next year, won't you?" she asked, suddenly.

"I'm not sure, now. He might stop it, out of nastiness. And think how long a year is! When you've once bin married it's so hard to go about alone."

Helen looked at her and frowned thoughtfully. Then she took her hands, hot and damp with tears, in hers.

"Mrs. Schlegel," she said, firmly, "I do understand **very** much more than you give me credit for. People get into the way of thinking that doctors and priests, and all the people whose names they see in the papers, are quite inhuman or superhuman. But they're not! They're just like **themselves**—perhaps a bit more so, that's all! I know all you feel, my dear girl. But if we all gave way to our feelings the whole world would be a madhouse."

She stopped dead, the words dashed from her lips as she remembered. Mrs. Schlegel looked at her in surprise. The church clock struck three.

"I must go back to my patient," said Helen, in altered tones. "Are you willing to go away for a month's holiday tomorrow? You won't be lonely with baby, will you?"

"Oh, doctor!" she sobbed; "you're too good to me. Anyone else would have sacked me, bringing a man here to your place."

"I'm not going to pretend that I'm not cross about it. I am—very. But I'm not going to preach. Doctors haven't time for that."

She held out her hand and gripped Mrs. Schlegel's firmly, as a man would.

"Now get into bed. Don't stand there in the cold any longer with your feet bare. Is there any milk left?"

"I think so," said the girl, surprised.

"Then get your slippers on first and go and warm a glassful of milk. It will help you to get to sleep."

"I couldn't touch it, doctor!"

"Of course you could if I ask you to. Make it very hot—all frothy—and drink it in little sips. Then count five hundred and you'll be asleep."

The door closed softly. Crossing the road she saw the glimmering candle upstairs in the bedroom for a minute; then it travelled slowly downstairs towards the kitchen. Mrs. Schlegel was doing as she was told.

The patient was noisy and difficult; several times she lost control of herself and swore violently when she thought the doctor hurt her unnecessarily; several times she shrieked out a curse on her husband, whom she blamed for all her pains.

"Oh, I am sick of confinements," Helen murmured to herself, wearily. "If only they'd keep themselves in hand a bit! Oh, I'm sick of women!"

The breath-catching smell of chloroform stole into the room: the woman's voluntary cries and curses changed to a thick, coughing moan, punctured by quick directions to the midwife. Later, when a newborn baby mewled in the room, Helen told the midwife that she had been splendid, and the mother—who was considerably over forty—that she had been a very good girl.

The woman smiled at her peacefully.

"I'm afraid I was a bit saucy, doctor. But the pains was fit to lift me off the bed," she said, apologetically.

"I know—you weren't a bit saucy," said Helen, and went downstairs in the dark. The father, who had been turned out of the bed, lay snoring on a couch in the kitchen in spite of the noise; two children, also turned out of their mother's room, slept on a mattress on the floor. The place smelt zoölogical.

The man stirred, yawned, and looked up.

"All over, mum?" he asked, jerking himself to wakefulness.

"Yes, another girl," she told him.

"My bloomin' luck! Can you see yourself out, mum?" he murmured, still half asleep.

She flashed her pocket torch.

"Yes, quite well. Good-night."

"Good-night," he murmured, and turned over on his uncomfortable bed. "Didn't ought have confinements at night—nine of 'em—turnin' folks out of their beds."

She went out into the cold morning air. She had been out of bed nearly four hours.

Jacqueline came out of her bedroom in her blue kimono when she heard Helen's quiet latch-key in the lock.

"You are vaire ty-ad, Madame, isn't it?" she said. "I mek you bee-utiful cup *café*."

"I am tired, Jacqueline," she said, sinking on to the bottom step of the stair for a moment. "But I've only just realized it. Run back to bed. You'll be cold."

"No, I mek cup *café*! Voule you kip you quiet one *moment*? I mek wataire in bat'."

She twittered into the kitchen and put the kettle on the gas stove. Helen still sat on the stairs, too limp to move. Jacqueline fluttered upstairs, her bare feet peeping out beneath the blue kimono, and turned on the water. As Helen followed her upstairs, she heard her usual mouse-like little squeak of delighted terror as the gas of the geyser "popped" at the match she applied.

"You are awfully kind," said Helen, dropping her hat and coat casually on the landing.

"Not at all, Madame," she said, softly. "Voulez-vous que je prenne votre chaussure?"

"Heavens, I don't need all this waiting on!" she said, rousing herself suddenly. "Really, you'll spoil me! I believe you're the only charming thing I ever see, Jacqueline—and I mustn't work you to death. Oh—listen to the clock! Only three more hours before it's time to get up!"

Jacqueline looked at her thoughtfully.

"I t'ink you are vaire seeck, Madame! Mon Dieu, my kattle! Dat Mod mek terribl' face if its fire are dirty to-morrow!"

She fluttered downstairs. With a sigh of enjoyment Helen lay back in the hot water, the tiredness leaving her limbs magically.

"Oh, thank God for baths," she sighed, and hugged the thought of Bethesda. Then she reflected on the night's business, and once again felt impatiently that she always had to be grown up and staid, humouring people, thinking for them, seeing them do things very badly, patting them on the back lest they did them more badly still. But by the time she was lying back luxuriously in bed, the impatience had vanished with the tiredness.

"W'at is der illiness you 'ave cure to-night, Madame?" asked Jacqueline, with polite interest as she brought the coffee in.

"Oh, another baby—in the slums! This is the ninth that has happened to this woman."

Jacqueline gave a little shriek.

"Nine *bébé*! Mon Dieu, des Engleeshwoman! Not'ing fine, not'ing bee-utiful! For der man she are gre't *vache*!"

CHAPTER XVII

NEXT day the thunderclouds round Helen's life massed, blinding her for the time, stunning her, dashing her to the ground.

She got Mrs. Schlegel away, with a month's salary paid in advance, and filled her place with providential ease, for a young woman called during the morning at the surgery—which was, on occasion, an employment agency—asking for work. She seemed quite competent. Mrs. Schlegel promised on her honour not to see the man or men during her month's rest, and Helen hoped that with the baby she would be safe, though certainly the moors in the late autumn were not the most exhilarating place on earth. Mrs. Schlegel was tired and could now rest: in her novel environment she would form new habits of thought.

It was a tearingly busy day. As Helen passed the dining-room door on her way out she reflected on the illogical sex prejudice that prevented her from drinking a brandy-and-soda to pull herself through the day's work, as a man would have done; and she went back into her consulting-room to mix a mild dose of ether and ammonia. It put sporadic energy into her, and got her through the Sharlock Street queue and some of the Lower Shellpit visits. The influenza epidemic seemed worse; isolation of patients was impossible; the hospital accommodation of the district was, at best, limited and able to cope only with ordinary epidemics and the many industrial accidents. She was feeling appalled at the numbers of young people who were dying, leaving small children to some sort of unorganized care, when Dr. Williams, of Upper Shellpit, rung her up on the 'phone. He had been one of her opponents: an old-fashioned practitioner, he simply had no time for women doctors. Now he spoke urgently.

"That you, Dr. Clevion? It's Williams. I'm speaking to you from my bed, unfortunately. This confounded bronchopneumonia, and my assistant has it, too. I've wired to London for a *locum*, but it's by no means certain I shall get one. Pfeiffer's bacillus seemed to smell out doctors. I say, can you take on some of my work till I get someone?"

"I'm nearly at my wits' end with my own work now," she said, hopelessly.

"I expect you are. I 'phoned to Thomson and Cadman, but they're absolutely out of it. I've at least a dozen cases—danger-line—and two confinements."

"Oh, hang the confinements! Sick of them! Anyway, send me your case-book down here. I can't possibly come to see you."

"That's really splendid of you! I can let myself go now. I wouldn't go through this morning again for anything. How many 'flu cases have you down there?"

"Seventy-four really bad; eight deaths yesterday. Five this morning were all in one family."

"You get it worse down there, of course. Really, I can't thank you properly."

"Don't try, then."

"I believe I was a bit antiquated about women doctors."

"You're talking far too much for a sick man," she said.

He heard a cheery laugh that made him think that Dr. Clevion couldn't be so very hard-worked, after all.

It was Committee afternoon; she had 'phoned to say that she could not be there when they sat at three o'clock, but, passing the Town Hall just after four, she drew her car into the ornamental square before the main door and went into the Committee Room. The meeting was breaking up half-heartedly; several of the members were down with influenza.

"Why, doctor, yo' look like that tex' in the Bible about 'Physician, heal thyself!'" said Parmoor, fussing across to shake hands.

"I'm a bit overworked," she said, sitting down heavily. "It's this influenza, you know. Oh, I don't mean I've got it," she added, as Parmoor edged away and surrounded himself with

an aura of magenta silk handkerchief and eucalyptus. "But it's making my hands full."

"Twenty-three deaths to-day, up to noon," said the Town Clerk.

"Such tragic deaths, too—mostly young parents this week. Not slum people at all, respectable working folk. One thinks of the children."

"How do yo' account for it, eh?" asked Parmoor, frowning thoughtfully.

Helen saw the editor listening eagerly and the reporter's hungry pencil poised: it had been a dead afternoon, from his point of view, without Helen to say the interesting bits after which he could put "Hear, hear" or "Laughter" in brackets. She decided that he should have a column.

"Lack of stamina—mostly. Due to bad feeding and overcrowding. In nearly every adult case this week the tragedy has followed the same course; there have been from three to six children; the parents have been anything from twenty to thirty-four; in two cases the man was out of work, which aggravated things. In the other cases the man caught influenza, went to work till he collapsed, died—in two cases before I got there—chiefly because his body was hopelessly unhealthy and his resistance low."

"That's the fault of the profiteers," grumbled someone.

"The Labour Party, putting wages and prices up," muttered someone else.

"Foreign competition," suggested a manufacturer, brightly.

The Rector mildly ventured "Secularization of education," and Helen's glance withered them.

"I've the utmost contempt for every 'eer and every 'tion and every party on earth," she said.

The reporter said "Hear, hear" and got in his brackets at last.

It was eight o'clock before she got home. Maud was looking thunderous because dinner was late; she had liked this arrangement of Helen's dining at the hospital every night, for Jacqueline was easily accommodated with a tray in the drawing-room, and she got off every night to her meetings.

She complained, as Helen came in, that Mrs. Watkins' understudy had left at five o'clock without peeling the potatoes. Helen looked at her dazedly.

"Shall I serve dinner at once?" asked Maud, icily.

"There are no patients, I suppose?"

"Yes, two."

"Then my dinner must wait. Give Mademoiselle hers and leave me some soup. Then you can go out."

"It's too late now, m'm," she said, patiently.

"Very well, then, it is," said Helen, going into the consulting-room.

She was feeling sick that there were patients here to-night. After a wakening bath and dinner she must go back to Sharlock Street. She felt in a dream. The first patient was soon disposed of—he was a man with a thoroughly businesslike, quite definite, swollen face that she was gratefully able to pass on to a dentist. The other patient was a woman she remembered faintly, a rather well-to-do woman who went to church a good deal.

As she sat talking to her diagnostically, her case came back; she had had twelve childless years of married life and both she and her husband wanted a child. Helen, summing her up, had given her and her husband innocuous physical advice and counselled optimistic reading of various Bible stories, notably those of Sarai, Hannah and Elizabeth. The woman's face was very happy as she sat facing the electric lamp.

"Doctor," she said, coming to the point with difficulty, "I feel that our prayers have been answered at last—after twelve years!"

Her voice was tremulously happy.

"You do? That's certainly very splendid, Mrs. Tarver, isn't it?" she said, and discussed details; the woman lost her reserve and became loquacious.

"I didn't come to you till I felt sure; I've been so extraordinarily well the last two months. I couldn't believe it. My sisters and all my friends are usually so ill and weakly the first few months."

"Of course, that's entirely an individual question. A woman who lives a normal, sensible life ought not to be seriously disturbed by pregnancy."

Her head began to hum suddenly. Mrs. Tarver's voice went on, quietly happy and complacent. Helen was not hearing her; her own words were buzzing through her brain again and again.

"You think there's no doubt, doctor? Two months—it would break our hearts if anything went wrong now."

"I think there is absolutely no doubt, Mrs. Tarver."

"Oh, I am so happy!" sighed the woman.

Mrs. Tarver fumbled in her bag and laid an envelope on the table. In the kitchen Maud was trying to show her patience and forbearance with Helen by rubbing knives and singing: "I'm but a stranger here."

"Doctor," said Mrs. Tarver, shyly; "when my husband and I talked over our great happiness last night, we both felt that we ought to show some gratitude that our prayers had been answered. He said, give ten pounds to Mr. Tappan for the Vestments Fund. Only I said that Mr. Tappan had not had very much to do with this affair, and you had, and would have more before it was over. So we've put ten pounds in this envelope—if you could use it to help one of your patients in Lower Shellpit who is sick and poor."

"That's really very kind of you both," said Helen, vaguely, wondering if she were talking nonsense.

"Well, we thought it was a sort of way of insuring that nothing would go wrong," said the woman, naïvely, looking into the doctor's white face. "But please—I'd rather you didn't help one of those—those unfortunate girls with it. Please yourself, of course, but I'd feel in a way as if it was putting a slur on my baby."

"Heav—ern is—my Hoooooooooome," came Maud's voice.

"Yes, I will—yes, it is—I am very tired to-night," she said, touching the bell. "Good-night, Mrs. Tarver."

Mrs. Tarver went out, feeling sympathetic about the poor doctors who were overworked so dreadfully with all the influenza about.

The front door closed softly. Maud went into the kitchen. She had conscientiously burnt Helen's soup to punish her for having kept dinner late, and now she poured it into a cold tureen and set it on the table. In the drawing-room Jacqueline sat staring gloomily into the fire, saying softly to herself, "Mon Dieu, mon Dieu—w'at life! I am *triste*!" Maud tapped at the door of the consulting-room and, hearing no sound, thought the doctor had gone upstairs. She opened the door to make sure and saw her lying crumpled on the ground by the door where she had said good-bye to Mrs. Tarver. Her first impulse was to rush towards her, raise her, help her, because she was a woman, and looked ill and very tired and Maud was a Christian. Next instant Maud remembered the influenza in the town, and knew that Helen had been exposed to it a good deal lately. She ran across the hall, and called:

"Mademoiselle, Dr. Clevion is lying down on the floor."

Jacqueline started up, her little wooden heels tapping as she flew into the consulting-room.

"I com', Madame! W'at 'ave you?" she cried, in her small voice, kneeling down beside her, trying to raise her.

Maud remained at a discreet distance.

"Voulez vous, please, Mod, find cognac? I gif Madame cognac."

"What do you mean? Brandy?" asked Maud.

"Oui, oui—she are faint. I mek her com' in life again. *Vite, vite*, Mod. *Dépêchez vous, n'est ce pas!* Der *pauvre* doctor!"

"I can't—I'm not allowed to handle the stuff," said Maud, doubtfully.

"Voulez vous, please, Mod, 'urry!" cried Jacqueline, knowing nothing of Maud's Temperance Society's rules.

The telephone bell rang out, loud, clamant, imperative. Maud, glad to get out of the difficulty without being unkind, ran to answer it. Then Jacqueline, letting Helen's head sink back on the floor, brought the brandy from the sideboard, poured some into a glass, and forced it between her clenched teeth. She poured some on her handkerchief, dabbed it gently on Helen's white forehead, on her strong, thin wrists; ran up-

stairs to her room like an excited water-wagtail to get eau-de-Cologne; and at last saw the fatigue-blackened eyelids quiver, the lips move.

"Voulez vous, please, keep you *vaire* quiet, Madame? I put carpet on you, keep you warm." She tucked a travelling rug she had brought in from the hall round her. "I think you are seeking yesterday night. I think you *vaire* seek now, Madame. I go tell M. Farne on telephone."

Helen struggled up, her hair wet with the brandy and eau-de-Cologne with which Jacqueline had drenched her forehead. She clutched at the heavy oak desk and at Jacqueline's small hand until she was able to stand on her feet.

"I believe I fainted," she said, in surprise.

They could hear Maud's voice at the telephone, speaking quickly.

"You are faint, you are seeking. You go in *bat'*, first, and I go find M. Farne."

Helen, still looking dazed, stroked back her damp hair.

"Is someone ill?" she asked, listening to the voice at the telephone. "I must go."

Maud came to the door. When she saw Helen so white, so black-eyed, she wished very much that she had warmed the plate and not burned the soup. Jacqueline frowned to her not to speak, and Helen, losing consciousness both of Maud and of the telephone, sat down heavily on the couch, her fingers twisting and untwisting. Jacqueline flew from the room, whispering to Maud as she went. But Helen did not notice.

In the kitchen Jacqueline closed the door and lowered her voice.

"She are seeking! Is it someone with illness?"

"No—it was from Sharlock," began Maud, panting a little.

"Der *sacré* Sharlock Street! Let it go in der *diable*! She are too much seeking for it. Voulez vous, please, Mod, not tell her of it?"

Maud had a struggle with herself for a moment; finally she decided that she could not tell a lie if Helen asked her directly, but she would not volunteer information of any sort. But when they crept back into the consulting-room Helen had gone,

and Jacqueline waited perhaps ten minutes before she ran up to the bedroom to see if she could brush her hair for her. But she was not there; she was not anywhere in the house. After a while Jacqueline went back to sit by the drawing-room fire, and Maud, repentant, laid a tray with Bovril ready for when her mistress came back. She spent much of the remainder of the evening between the window and the front door, looking out anxiously.

CHAPTER XVIII

TWENTY minutes later, in the November fog, Helen drove up to the gates of the hospital. There was the sound of the fire-bell in her ears, and she laughed a little shrilly thinking that if there were any casualties to-night they would have to find someone else. She cut off a corner of the bed of late bronze chrysanthemums and was only conscious from the list of her car, when she brought it to a standstill, that she was not on the path. She tried to back away, gave up the attempt, and left it, with the smell of crushed chrysanthemums rising all round her. She noticed, in her headlong flight, how bare the verandah looked, with all the tubs empty of plants in the chill mist; the next minute she was in the warmth of the hall with the bright electric light beating on her hair, all beaded with fog, and on her silk blouse, dabbled with the brandy Jacqueline's frightened hands had spilled. She had forgotten to put on a coat, but had not been cold.

"Is he in the study?" she asked the maid, who looked at her in surprise.

"Yes, he was at dinner, but there was an urgent telephone call."

Helen flew along the passages to the study. At Francis's door she paused; inside was the soft rise and fall of a voice. He was praying. She passed on. Louis's voice, sharp, incisive, came to her as she opened the door.

"She has not been here to-day, and said she shouldn't——"

He broke off, staring at her as she opened the door. To him she looked like the ghost of a suddenly emotionalized cynic. Abruptly he rang off, without another word, and came across the room to her.

"Louis," she said, "I had to come here."

"I knew you'd come," he said gently, but she did not hear him.

She walked to the hearth and, one hand clutching the mantelpiece while the other clasped and unclasped itself, she said in a trembling voice:

"Louis, I'm going to have a child."

He stared at her in sheer amazement, dropped his cigarette, and stooped to pick it up.

"I mean it," she cried, almost frantically. "Oh, don't stare at me!"

"But—how on earth——?" he stammered.

"The usual method, I suppose," she said, trying to laugh cynically, and ending with her voice choked in tears, her mouth twisted.

"But I don't understand. It isn't possible!"

"Oh, don't be a fool!" she cried impatiently. "That night here—when I was the Scarlet Woman——" She looked at him, and began to laugh hysterically. He gazed at her, and whispered:

"Hush—he's in the next room, remember! He may know your voice."

She stopped, as if the spigot of laughter had been turned off in her for ever. And just as suddenly she began to cry, quietly this time, with her face buried in her hands as she knelt on the hearthrug.

"I never imagined it—I never thought of it. That—that side of love hadn't come to me yet."

She sobbed then and he could not find a word to say.

"I wanted him—most frightfully. But I'd never given a thought to details."

He found his voice then, though he realized, more than she did yet, the full terror of all that was to come.

"We don't think of physical details—about ourselves, somehow, do we? I suppose we see too much of them."

She shook her head hopelessly. She was not listening. Knowing her, he thought it better to let her talk herself out.

"I loved him, you know—because I squabbled with him so at first. Then it got to a sort of blaze except when it was a

kind of tenderness; I used to want to tuck him up in bed when he looked so tired. Louis, do you mind all this? I must try to explain it all—to myself, I mean—and I'm all in a muddle when I think about it alone. I can't go and tell *him*, can I?"

"Go on," he said, quietly.

She buried her face in her twitching hands.

"Lately—it got awful! I forgot his tiredness, and—our work. I forgot our delightful quarrels—it all resolved itself into a tremendous longing to be disintegrated for a while, by him. That's fearfully tempting to anyone so stand-alone as I am. Do men ever feel like that—about being disintegrated?"

He looked at her for a moment, threw away his cigarette, and buried his face in his hands. She watched him, scarcely conscious of him even then.

"I think the normal man wants to do the disintegrating part of the process," he said, slowly.

She was silent for a while. When she spoke again she was calmer.

"I never guessed it until to-night. That night, in the room upstairs—I scarcely thought what happened. I remember I felt a bit surprised, perhaps a little blank about it. I know I led him on, as people call it. I wanted him to see that physical love wasn't dreadful. And I wanted to make him marry me. I felt I knew best."

"That was mostly my fault, you know," put in Louis.

She shook her head.

"Then so many things happened, such big things—and I found that that night wasn't one of them. I just let it all slip. To-night a patient came, very thankful that she was going to have a child, and as she talked about details I saw them in a white glare."

He looked at her, and stretched out his hand to her. She caught at it a minute and felt better.

"Louis—it's in June! Whatever am I going to do? I've promised that woman who came to-night that I'd take her case in June."

She stared into the fire, utterly lost, unable to think.

"I can't accommodate myself to it, Louis—I mean, even

to thinking about it! Just think how it's going to hinder my work! How can I, with the Garden City, and Bethesda, and Lord knows how many patients. . . . Louis, I haven't any more time to go having babies than you have, have I?"

Then she was sobbing again, clinging to his hand, wetting it with her tears.

"It's no use. I can't be sentimental about this," she cried. "I can't tell myself prettily that I want to hold his child in my arms, because I don't, one little bit! We've no time for these soft, gentle things of life. I see it now, just as he said! How can I narrow myself down to loving a child—my own child? Louis, don't *you* see that there's no room whatever for narrow loves and gentle personal things if you're trying to get out to a new earth—something like Christ—or Buddha?"

"But you love Francis," he reminded her, unable to follow her.

"I don't, now. Not that way! That's the awfulness of it. I've learnt so much the last two months. I *did* love him—and, Lord, how I wanted the softness and thrills of a love affair! But—one mustn't!"

She drew herself away from him, then, as if one must not want even the hand of a friend. Staring into the fire, she talked as if she spoke to herself.

"Francis was right about Christ, you know. I think the Roman Catholics are right, too, about marriage. Sex is too individualistic. It draws you in on yourself too much. Oh, don't tell me this sex business is a natural and amiable sort of weakness to give way to! As if I don't know! But if you're deliberately and consciously trying to make a new earth, you just can't sit in corners and think of yourself. The damnable thing is, I've found out all this too late. It was the work that pulled us together right at the start, and now I've paralyzed his work and landed myself with an illegitimate child."

She frowned and stared at him as that burst upon her, and he could find nothing to say. He was feeling almost as stunned as she was, stunned by the horrible cussedness of things, by his helplessness to do anything. And all the time, right deep in his mind something kept saying to him that she would come

out of this, as he had come out of his own morass, with muscles very much strengthened.

"Why, that's true! Louis, can you imagine anything so flamingly silly as Helen Clevion the mother of an illegitimate child—or any child, for that matter?"

She began to walk up and down the room, her hands clasping and unclasping themselves frantically.

"There's no need to worry about that," he began, and knew as he spoke that he was not being honest.

"Oh, I don't worry! I don't care a damn! It isn't that—only—it's the incongruousness of it that beats me! If you were to tell them at St. Crispin's or in Edinburgh, they'd think you were mad! Besides, what on earth am I going to do with a child? My work! I can't sit in a wrapper in a rocking-chair by a nursery fire looking fluffy and ethereal when I've my work to do!"

She dropped down again on the hearth: Louis wished himself a wise man to find some light in her darkness; he felt that his helplessness, his inadequacy, were betrayals of her friendship. But she sat still, letting wave after wave of realization break over her. The first thing that touched her was her work; that broke over her, paralyzing for a while, so that she could not feel the more sinister side of it. Then, as the first wave receded, another, more intimate, came.

"Louis!" she cried, suddenly, clutching at his knee. "You told me Francis's father died of locomotor ataxy—and Francis? Oh, God!"

He was silent for a minute: he had thought of this and hoped that it would not have occurred to her yet.

"I think," he said, slowly, "that I'd wait till you see the child before you worry about that. Don't you? You know the freakishness of these hereditary tendencies. Besides, you're so absolutely fit yourself. Queer thing—it puzzled me a bit that you—you're a fine animal, with a jolly good brain—should have loved Reay, so obviously not robust. But it occurred to me that that was just another bit of natural selection: normal plus subnormal probably produces normal."

He did not quite believe that and knew that she would not later on; but he hoped that she would believe it now.

"You see," he went on, in matter-of-fact tones, "a child of yours will be safeguarded in every way; right on from this moment he will be safeguarded; and you know as well as I do that ignorance is more murderous than congenital disease."

He broke off, seeing that this had penetrated through the seething waves of misery, and not wanting to spoil it by over-insistence. Again she was silent, thinking: again she burst out that she could not spare time to have babies. And that brought another thought in its train.

"Why," she cried, her voice cracking on a high note, "about next March I'll have to stop! Right from March till July! What on earth am I going to do then? Until March no one but you will know. But after that—there's something distasteful in the idea of patients coming to a doctor who is obviously pregnant—don't you think so?"

"I suppose it's convention," he began.

"Good Lord—if women aren't handicapped!" she said, and reached up to the mantelpiece for a cigarette. She lit it with a blazing stick from the hearth and sat down again, her hands clasped round her knees, her back against Louis's chair. Watching her face, and her impatient movements, he could see the play of thought in her mind; he waited in unendurable suspense until the last most terrible thought should come to her.

She puffed away nervously. He stood up, and looked reflectively towards the telephone. Then he went over to the window, drew the curtain aside, and looked out towards Shellpit. It was Saturday night. The arc lamps round the new buildings were all out save one which cast a bronzish glimmer through the dense fog. Beyond that he could see nothing; the lights of Shellpit were lost in the murk; only down below he could see the red glare in the sky, a little to the right of Napoli. Her voice arrested him and he came back. Once more he looked doubtfully at the telephone. But she had stood up and was looking at him, this time with real fear and horror.

"Louis! The idiocy of it! Here all this talk about my

work, and wasting three months! If I have an illegitimate child, there'll *be* no work."

"That's what I've been trying to see some solution to ever since you told me, my dear," he said, as he came across the room.

And then she completely lost her head. Flinging herself on the chair she sobbed and beat out impassioned reproaches to the world that had taken from her her man, her happiness, and was now taking her work. She would not have her work interfered with! She would not have the child at all! So she cried, and Louis walked about, wondering what on earth he could do—whether to let her writhe under this slowly approaching tragedy, or stun her with a small immediate trouble. Suddenly, speaking casually, he said:

"You know, what I want to get at is—are you ashamed about it?"

"Ashamed?" she cried, hotly. "Good Lord, no! Why should I be ashamed?"

"Well then—can't you afford to let a few censorious, rather silly people cut you? All it amounts to really is, that you've a rather more concrete proof of what happened the other night than you had expected. What happened, happened—and since then you've done your work just as well; you've gone about among folks and they've said nice things to you, and about you; and no one has been any the wiser, have they?"

"That's the awful thing about it."

"I've a pretty good idea that it was much more Reay's fault, if there's any fault at all, than yours, in spite of all you say."

"It wasn't! It was my fault entirely! I led him on, and I'd do it again. But that's nothing to do with it now. Oh, Louis, I'll never be able to face it out!"

"Yet you're so fond of a scrap! And think how much better equipped you are than most! You've brains, and you've the courage of your convictions; when you think of girls like Mrs. Schlegel, and that servant of yours who ran away, and Jacqueline—they're the sort who can't face it out. I can't see you turning tail, somehow."

She drew a deep breath, and burst out, indignantly:

"Louis, if it were you, you could have ten illegitimate children and they wouldn't stop your work! Oh, it is damnable—damnable! I'll have to give up the Garden City. But I can't!"

"Oh, Lord, if only I could think of something decently sensible to say!" he stammered, his forehead a network of wrinkles. "Look here, Helen, can't you hang on to the thought that you've started that Garden City going?"

"What's the good of starting things? I want to see it through. I've had the work and worry. I want to be in at the prize-giving! Don't you? Doesn't anyone?"

"Of course we do! But scientists never are. They only see the first little tiny bit of anything they start; they never see the end, because things happen so slowly. You've been luckier than most."

"O-h!" she gasped, staring at him.

"Do you think Lister and Jenner and Pasteur ever got the reward, or even guessed at the end of what they started? Or Simpson, when he first doped himself with chloroform? Why, they scarcely know even whether they've done well or ill when they die! And look at Ehrlich—it's not until the grandchildren of people being to-day injected with his '914' to wipe out syphilis are in the world, that it will have been proved a success and the prize-giving can take place! And Ehrlich then? He'll just be a name for curious students to swot up—and they'll be rather bored because there won't be any syphilis then, and they'll not be any more interested in Ehrlich than we are in the first man who made a fire or a wheel or a lever."

"Oh, Louis, it does seem hard," she said, and this time he saw that she was more interested in the austerity of science than in the austerity of life.

"Only if you look at it in the narrow, personal way. If you shut your eyes to yourself and keep them focused on your work, you don't care twopence for results; you just build as best you can and then die and hope to goodness there'll be someone to carry on after you. And there usually is."

The fire was almost out. He laid fir-cones on the glowing

ashes; in an instant they began to blaze and splutter. She watched them and drew a deep breath.

"I can see that my patients will leave me."

"Not the Lower Shellpit ones."

"No. But to be brutally practical—the Lower Shellpit ones don't pay! The others have had to pay for them! You see, I've put all the money I inherited from mother into Bethesda."

He caught his breath sharply.

"Have you insured Bethesda against fire, Helen?" he asked. She shook her head.

"No. I'm glad you reminded me. I ought to have done so, of course, but in the rush of work I've overlooked it."

He stood up nervously, and she looked at him in surprise; her own passion of misery had exhausted itself a little and she felt spent and sick. Having rung the bell, he met the maid at the door and gave her whispered directions.

"We seem to be getting very jumpy, both of us," he said, sitting down again. "I suppose you've subsisted on that *mist. ammonii* all day? You must eat something."

"I don't believe I'll ever eat again," she said.

Once more he stood up, with his back to her and looked through the window at the fog. The telephone bell rang sharply, and he almost darted across to it.

"Yes," he said, "she is here now." He listened for some moments. "I'll tell her presently. I'll ring you up again soon. It is impossible now—the Derrys, you say?"

He replaced the receiver and sat down.

"What is it?" she asked, anxiously. "What's the matter with the Derrys? It was their family who had Bethesda first."

"I don't know, but in any case they'll have to wait," he said, sharply. Then, turning from her to throw more fir-cones on to the fire, he said slowly:

"Helen, do you know what I've been thinking?"

"What?"

"I'm wondering if—funny how this sort of thing ties a man in knots!—I was thinking—I say, it would stop all this worry if we got married, wouldn't it?"

She gasped as the truth of his casual words flashed upon her.

"Oh, Louis, don't be an idiot!" she said; but her eyes filled with tears—not the passionate tears that had exhausted her before, but the sudden, gentler tears that are released by sympathy and kindness.

"I'm not. I'm trying to be practical. Neither of us particularly wants to get married. But this child of yours is going to smash up your work pretty thoroughly, as you can see. If we were married right at once——"

"No, I couldn't," she said, shaking her head decidedly. "It's certainly a jolly good idea, and you're a brick, but——"

"I'm afraid that, later on, you'll find you can't carry on. Then, you see, it will be too late. If we got married at once, and you went away about March."

"And hide behind you? No, I can't do that. Wish to goodness I could. It would certainly be a lot easier. But I don't want to marry now."

"I don't think you quite realize all that's going to happen to you," he said, earnestly. "It's going to spoil your work."

"And if we were married I should spoil yours! I'd want to boss—you know that! Lord knows I'm rude enough to you as it is! I'd probably lose your friendship entirely if we lived with each other. No, I'll see it through."

He frowned, and walked about the room in perplexity.

"Helen, you're hard to manage," he began.

"Just what I said! If we got married, you'd unconsciously feel the need to manage me. And I'd feel the same need to manage you. I'd be frightful as a wife, so let's leave that out of the reckoning altogether. If it comes to the worst I'll give up St. Mary's Road and live at Bethesda. I can sleep in one of the baths!"

The maid brought in a tray with food, and placed it on a little table he had put beside her.

"It's no use, Louis," she protested.

"Yes, it is. And you're going to drink a glass of champagne. Nothing like it for steadying your nerves."

He poured it for her and left her, saying that he had several messages to send to the night nurses. She heard him telephoning in the hall, but could not hear what he said. When

he came back again she had swallowed the champagne, and had made a brave attempt to play with the food; but she was crying again, sore and hopeless now that the first panic had worn off.

"The fog is very bad," said Louis. "I want you to stay here to-night. You're not fit to go home, and be alone."

"Oh, I couldn't sleep here. I must go home."

"Really, you can't, old girl—don't be such a determined obstructionist."

He made a futile attempt to laugh, but she said, defiantly:

"I must go home—I'd go mad if I stayed here! Besides, I'm beginning to worry about that 'phone message. I wonder whatever those Derrys have been up to."

"Oh, Lord!" he muttered under his breath.

She stood up, and began to arrange her hair.

"I didn't have a hat, did I?" she said, looking at him. "Don't be cross with me, Louis. You see how it is. I never can take advice."

Then he spoke, in a low voice:

"There's something else I've got to tell you."

"What? Francis?" she cried, with a start.

"No. He's asleep. I've just been in there. No—it is—Bethesda set on fire to-night!" he said bluntly.

"On fire?" she cried. "But how could it? Is anyone hurt?" she managed to gasp, and found her way back to the chair again.

"No. There was no one there!"

"But why? It's Saturday night! It ought to have been full of children—queues of them, all Saturday."

"That woman who came in Mrs. Schlegel's place—she got rid of everybody by some tale or other. They've arrested her. Apparently she put paraffin and petrol there."

"But why?" she cried again.

"She's one of the Derrys——"

"Oh, why didn't you tell me before? Louis, you must come with me at once! I must go! When did it start?"

"Before you got here, I think."

Quickly she recalled the ring of the telephone and Maud's scared face when she was waking from her faint.

She was at the door then.

"It's no use, my dear," said Louis, his voice shaking. "These old houses—a lot of timber in them! They've just 'phoned me again——"

She went across to the window and looked out. There was a glare in the sky through the fog, but it was only the glare she had seen many times before from the forges; the one arc lamp over the night-watchman's hut in the Garden City shone out, with a mist rainbow about it; she closed the curtain, crossed the room, and stood still, gazing into the fire. Her hands hung limp and heavy.

Louis was watching her anxiously; all the evening he had been trying to decide whether or not to tell her; possibly, if she had been content to go to bed at the hospital he would not have told her till the morning; but to let her go home, and have the news broken to her by Jacqueline!

"All the time I was thinking about myself, and next June, my work was being burned up," she said.

He could say nothing. Watching her face, he saw the misery going; it was being covered by a mask of something stern and hard. At last, feeling it impossible to watch her so any longer, he said tentatively:

"It's no use trying to begin to sympathize."

"A mercy you realize that, anyway! How can you sympathize? Everything goes so damned right for you! Here's your work! Here's your hospital!"

"I asked you to share it, didn't I, old girl? Lord, if only I were one of the strong silent men in books, I'd make you——"

Her face changed, became quickly gentle.

"I know. You're an old brick, really. But you can see the idiocy of that proceeding! No. I've been thinking centuries during the last few minutes. I'm not going to skulk! I did this thing with my eyes open—though I admit I had a fearful squint! That it's all—everything I've ever done—turned out badly can't be helped. Anyway, *I'm* not going to be helped! I'm going through with it on my own."

She held out her hand to him.

"I guessed you would, you know," he said. "It's the only way, really."

"That's why you risked asking me to marry you?" she said, with a hard little laugh that hurt his throat. "There, you know I didn't mean that! I'll have to bottle up this tendency to say horrible things to my friends. And I'm going now—going home."

"Very well, then, if you will. I'll get Lloyd up," he said. "The fog's terrible."

"I'm not going in the car. I want to walk."

She was starting off then, without coat or hat, but he found one of the nurses' cloaks in the hall and wrapped her in it.

As she passed the door of Francis's room, she stopped.

"I'd like to look at him—all nice and safe," she said.

He opened the door and let her in. The night nurse sat in her big chair, reading by the light of a lamp. Francis lay on his right side, his eyes closed. She bent over him, touching his limp hand with her lips. He opened his eyes and looked at her, feeling the slight touch. His eyes smiled at her, his lips moved faintly. She stooped to listen.

"Little sister sheep," he whispered. His eyes, in the faint glimmer, had seen her nun-like cloak, and sent his mind wandering off to the pilgrim-trodden ways of Assisi.

When she turned again at the door, his eyes were closed; the light shining faintly from the concentrated circle of radiance round the reading-lamp cast the bars of the bed over him, like the bars of a prison.

She did not look at Louis again; she had forgotten all about him, as she set off, buried in thought, over the verandah, past the strong scent of crushed chrysanthemums, on to the moor. The brittle, wintry twigs of the heather caught her ankles. A few paces behind, walking silently, came Louis; he wanted to see that she reached home safely. She walked slowly at first, then, as her thoughts changed, more quickly. At the pile of bricks and tiles and great timbers carted up for the making of the Garden City she paused. Further down the hill stood several of the little squares, with their twelve sur-

rounding houses, their common play-houses and wash-houses; here was one whose foundations were only just laid. She put out her hands, passing them over the pile of bricks as though to assure herself that they were not a dream. They were wet with the fog: she drew her hands back and looked at them. The structures of the half-built houses loomed ghostly through the fog that had now begun to sway a little with a light wind that was wakening; she walked over the foundation of the play-house and stood there, looking about her, visioning the hidden end of it. As she stood, she seemed to see on to the days when it would be filled with life and warmth and light; children would laugh and cry—people would talk, and be kind and unkind—life would go on——

For perhaps ten minutes she stood there, the arc-light shining down like chill daylight. Then she turned away, walking swiftly down the streets where people were asleep. By the corner of St. Mary's Road she paused, not sure whether to go on down to Martin's Street or not. A minute later she had her latch-key in the door. Louis went over by the church wall and waited to see that she did not come out again.

She must have gone straight upstairs: the blinds in her bedroom were drawn, the lights switched on. For half an hour or more he stayed, and at last she came to the window, in her nightgown, drawing up the blind and looking out into the night. Her hair was neatly plaited; she looked calm. Next minute the lights went out, and he set off on his solitary tramp home through the night.

CHAPTER XIX

NEXT day Helen went down to Sharlock Street to her work as though nothing unusual had happened. It was not until the work of the surgery was finished that she went to look at the still smoking ruins of the two houses and the one next door that had been damaged. The outer walls were mostly intact. The windows gaped like the eye-sockets of a skull; the lead piping, melted with the heat, shone here and there in little silvery runnels amidst the piles of rubble. There was a smell of charred timber and the stench of a broken sewer. It surprised her that the place had burnt so quickly in the dense fog. One of her patients, standing smoking at the street corner, ventured a word of sympathy and told her how the fire-engine had been delayed by running into a wall in the mist and injuring the horses.

"Dirty 'ounds, them as done it," muttered the man, jerking his head towards the ruin. "Flayin' alive's too good for them."

She smiled vaguely and went back to the surgery to 'phone the sanitary authorities.

"There's a sewage main damaged through the fire in Martin's Street," she told them. "It will have to be seen to at once. We can't cope with diphtheria as well as influenza down here, and if this fog lasts——"

"I'm afraid nothing can be done to-day. It's Sunday," said the clerk on the 'phone.

"Is the M.O.H. there?" she asked, her voice hardening.

"No, he's been in for a few minutes. But he's gone now. It's Sunday, you know."

"*Of course* it's Sunday! But do you think bacteria keep the Sabbath? I'll ring the M.O.H. up myself, thank you."

In a few minutes she was speaking to him, and had his promise to see to the sewer at once.

She got through the day scarcely conscious. Lloyd brought her car early, with a great sheaf of chrysanthemums. She had much to bear in the way of sympathy, but she was not so blinded by unhappiness that she could not see the genuine kindness that prompted the clumsy rubbing of salt into the wound. Miss Wembley called on her way to church, and was tremulously kind; she kissed Helen; it was the first time for months that anyone had treated Helen as a woman. She met the Rector coming out of church from the noon Celebration and he stopped, walked across and held up his hand for her to stop, reminding her, with his bland palm, so ludicrously of the City police in London regulating the traffic, that she laughed. It was a face smiling and not, as he had expected, bravely fighting tears, that looked down at him.

"I am truly sorry, doctor, to hear of the—er—or—ah—disaster," he began.

"That's very kind of you, Mr. Tappan," she told him. "But after all, Bethesda was only the most temporary of temporary measures."

She had discovered that as she spoke.

"You are not thinking of rebuilding, then?" he asked anxiously.

"Oh no. The idea is to wipe out Lower Shellpit altogether. When our Garden City is ready—— Think of those dinky little bathrooms, Mr. Tappan, and the communal playrooms. Poor Bethesda! It would have been just a sheer hulk, like poor Tom Bowling, wouldn't it?"

The Rector shook his head.

"You'll never wipe out places like Lower Shellpit, doctor, however much you coddle the lower classes."

"When your great-great-grandson is Rector of Shellpit—if they have Rectors then!—there won't be such a thing as a slum on earth! Already the better people are getting ready for the Garden City."

"Tut-tut!" said the Rector, and sighed. "Well, well, we shall never agree! But—apart from my very natural desire to offer my sincerest, my very sincerest sympathy, in which, I am sure, Mrs. Tappan and the girls join me——"

Helen nodded. "Thank you," she said. "Well?"

"Well—I am most anxious to know if you are going to appeal for sympathy of a more public, and—if I may say so—*practical* kind?"

"Money? Oh no!"

"I must confess that I am relieved! I want to make a grand appeal for my Renovation Fund this winter. There have been so many deserving war charities of late years that the Church Herself has been badly neglected; we must have a new organ, new vestments, and the church must be painted. In addition to that I want all the stones in the churchyard to be re-lettered. No one has been buried in the old churchyard for thirty years; it strikes me as infinitely sad that their names and their days should all have been forgotten."

Suddenly Helen smiled again: Mr. Tappan, wanting to re-letter the tombstones of all these forgotten men and women, seemed just as futile as she had been last night, pleading to be in at the prize-giving for her work, when the great men had built so slowly, so exceedingly well that they saw no more than the foundations.

"I never worry much about graves myself; too busy keeping people out of them, I expect! Think of the men who died in the war—scarcely any grave at all!"

"True, true! Only too true. But I must run away. We dine at midday on Sunday to give the maids a chance to attend evensong. Good-bye, doctor. It is encouraging to see you taking your trouble so well!"

People showed their sympathy for Helen in all sorts of ways. Jacqueline bought large quantities of flowers. The *Comet* wanted to start a subscription, but Helen used the argument she had employed when talking with Mr. Tappan; she knew it was specious, but did not feel called upon to explain why she refused to use public money subscribed by people who, very soon, would cut her.

The influenza epidemic reached its height before Christmas; in one day the death-rate reached eighty-two; for a whole week she scarcely got to bed at all, and did not go near the hospital. Then, just as suddenly as it had begun, the epidemic

died down, gave a few feeble flickers of life in Lower Shellpit, and ceased; but not before the still closed Mission had been turned into an emergency hospital by means of beds given by the Red Cross Society in response to an urgent letter from Helen in the *B.M.J.*

All through that winter she worked as if she were sentenced to death and wanted to cram a lifetime into a few months. She went to the hospital as often as she could, passing the ever-growing and shaping Garden City, where sometimes, to her dismay, bad weather suspended operations a little. Several nights she went alone, in the brightness of frosty December nights, into the houses that were being decorated; like a ghost she wandered round the clean spacious rooms, surveyed the gleaming bathtaps of the newest stainless metal, the white tiles in bathroom and scullery, the patent porcelain cooking stoves that could be kept clean by a few rubs every day. It was in the communal playrooms and kitchen and wash-houses that she felt her scheme might fail; human nature, she was finding, still sat chawing bones in a cave, and snarled out at anyone who touched a shred of spat-out periosteum. Petty jealousies and inability to sink egotism were giants in the path of the very people who most needed the help of a community. But on the whole, New Shellpit was a sheer delight. It offset the things that hurt and disappointed.

One night she and Louis discussed the ethics of her position—or rather, she hurled at him her own arguments about it. It was the day of the Derry trial; Helen had done her best to have no hand in it, but she was dragged in, and a remand was ordered. The police were anxious to get rid of the whole expensive, notorious family. The girl, Sarah Derry, who had set fire to Bethesda, becoming terrified, revealed the whole story of her mother's life, hoping by so doing to be dealt with leniently. She laid about her broadcast: her sisters and their men were not spared. But the women were very wary, and the police, who knew everything but could prove nothing, were powerless. Only the old mother and Sarah were convicted. Mrs. Derry was sent to prison for six months for keeping a disorderly house, and went out of the dock cursing Helen, who

felt very sorry for her. The girl was given two years' hard labour for wilful arson.

"I do wish I hadn't been dragged in," said Helen, after she had been talking to Francis about his message while her mind was busy with the Derry problem.

"I don't see how you could have helped it," said Louis.

"Neither do I. But it makes me feel an abominable hypocrite."

"You're certainly not a hypocrite! You're getting positively morbid about this!"

She smoked in silence for a while. Then she threw her cigarette away and spoke calmly.

"No. It isn't morbid. Louis, I'm going to let the whole thing out! I can't pose as a model of the virtues when, according to people's standards, I'm not!"

"What good will it do if—as you seem to put it—you give yourself up?"

"Not a bit! It's my damned pride. It will do an infinite amount of harm to my work. But I can't tell lies."

She refused to say anything more about it, or how she was going to set about "letting it all out." But he could see from her face that she was determined, and anything he could say would be of little use. And she gave him no chance to say anything more. She simply walked out and went home.

Sitting by the fire in the drawing-room, with paper propped on a book and her fountain pen in her hand, she wrote:

"DEAR MR. PARMOOR,

"I hope this letter won't grieve you. But as it was your influence that made the Housing Committee invite me in the first place, I feel I must write to you first. I must resign. In a few months it is inevitable that you would ask me to, so I am only anticipating the evil day a little. I do not intend to go into details. They will be known soon enough. Possibly you will guess at them when I tell you that I am very unhappy about it all, and that I shall shortly be going away for a few months. I care so tremendously about the Garden City that I prefer to leave it entirely rather than let

my continued identification with it hinder it. It is a great temptation to me to stay and fight till I am kicked out, but that is merely the selfish point of view. I know enough of social work to realize that it is largely carried on by people with conventional morals, though it is to the unconventional thinkers that they have to look for impetus. A lapse from conventional morality among those who are building a new earth tends to get a lot of rubbish thrown at the nice clean buildings. So my building days are over. I am not a bit worse as a surgeon for this experience: I have a shrewd idea that I shall be a better psychologist now that I'm in the position of the toad beneath the harrow, and not the butterfly upon the road who preached contentment to him. Please read this letter to the others, and let them think what they like. You have been very nice to me, all of you, and I'd like not to be hurting you now, but I can't help it.

"Yours sincerely,

"HELEN CLEVION."

There was a tap at the door as she was reading the letter through, frowning here and there at the phraseology, which seemed stilted, and a little out of Parmoor's range. Maud came in, looking disdainful.

"Mlle. Rousseau is carrying on again in her bedroom, m'm," she said.

Helen put her paper weight on top of the letter, and stood up.

"Oh, poor child!" she said, and turned to the fire. "Isn't it cold to-night, Maud? Would you get a few logs?"

"The scuttle is filled," said Maud, who felt that it was unreasonable to want logs when coal was there. Besides, it was the charwoman's work to bring in the fuel.

"I know. There's plenty of coal. I want logs, please—nice dry ones."

Maud sniffed and Helen went upstairs.

Jacqueline was certainly "carrying on." She had periodic hysterical fits of depression that Helen realized were physical, though Jacqueline thought they were soul-crises. She was lying on her bed, face downwards, shivering as she sobbed and

shrieked out an inarticulate jumble of French and English prayers and curses.

"What's the matter this time, Jacqueline?" said Helen, putting a cool hand on the girl's shoulder, noting, with appreciative delight in a too rarely beautiful thing, how exquisitely white it was, with a delicate flush of shell-pink beneath the cream-like bloom of it.

Jacqueline shook with the violence of her sobs until they subsided a little. Then she threw herself round, with incredible swiftness, drawing the kimono round her convulsively as she realized that it was her only clothing.

"*Qu'avez vous, ma chère? Une crise des nerfs?*" she asked.

"Madame, I cannot 'ave des life anny more," cried Jacqueline, her brown eyes melting with self-pity.

"But why, my dear?"

She seated herself on the bed, looking at Jacqueline with a little smile on her lips.

"Oh, I cannot! You are vaire good for me, but I cannot live like dirty workin' class *esclave* anny more! To-night I go in bat'. In my *boîte a coudre* to-day I find *poudre* for der bat'. I 'ave des *poudre* when I am wit' May, and we go find der man. Smell bee-utiful, Madame—make me t'ink lot t'ing!"

"But I thought you hated that life with May. Don't you, Jacqueline?"

"I do 'ate it. But to-night I see me in *miroir*, and I look and t'ink to May. She are not half so bee-utiful dan me! I say to myself: 'Des charming girl! W'at life!' Madame, I am miserabl'."

"But, you silly little girl, if I were one-half so nice to look at as you I'd be profoundly happy about it, not miserable!"

"Ah, you cannot *comprendre*," she cried, burying her face in her hands again and shaking. 'I crie because I am so bee-utiful, and no one is here to see. Not man in der town I let peeck up my *mouchoir*. Onlie M. Farne—and he are not man. He are *docteur*. W'at is der use be charming? I live like *esclave*!"

"But, my dear," cried Helen, thoroughly hurt, "you don't live like a servant! I know I work harder than you do."

"I know it, Madame; but you are good woman, clean

woman, stron' woman. You do not want bee-utiful t'ing in your eye like I want it. You do not want man. I want it! I want man keess me, say charming t'ing to me; I want ride in motor-car; I want lot bee-utiful dress, and maid. I cannot mek my life bee-utiful wit'out man. If I find man and want marry it, I t'ink to my shildrens, and because I am dirty girl, I nevaire marry. And 'ow can I find *riche* man, charming man in des *sacré* Shellpeet?"

She looked at Helen with unutterable misery: that it was selfish misery mattered to Helen not one jot. Jacqueline, with her desire for everything beautiful, and rich and *convenable* and her half-ignorant, half-satiated horror of men; Helen with her serene disregard for anything beautiful or *convenable* in her own life so long as she could clean up muddles—they were in the same boat! In the eyes of Upper Shellpit, of people like Mrs. Tarver and the Rector and Dr. Williams, they were both "fallen women"! She laughed suddenly: the soft, liquid brown eyes looked up into the grey ones that were serene but just a little hard. Jacqueline's hand reached out and touched hers—softly, like the brushing of a moth's wing. She looked at her pleadingly.

"Madame, I go! I go find man! Des respectabl' life are too dull, too terribl' for me. You are vaire *gentille*, vaire good, but you are clean woman, and clean woman cannot understand. I want find dirty man now, give me lot *monnaie*! So! I am 'appy a leetl' time, den." She stared at Helen, and added, suddenly: "You voule not be miserabl'?"

"I shall! I shall be unbearably miserable if you go away. I think if you put up with this sort of life a little longer you will be happy. Listen, Jacqueline—Dr. Farne told me you—you are rather fond of me."

"Madame," cried Jacqueline earnestly, "I lov' you! I lov' you bettaire dan Rex. I lov' you like der nuns, because you make me want com' clean."

Helen, flushing hotly, tried to stop the rush of words, but Jacqueline went on, unheeding:

"Ever since I come in your 'ouse I paid lot Mass for you. I put *scapulaire* of Sacred 'Eart in your bed! I send in Paris

for holy *médaille* of St. Christophe for your motor-car, so no accident com' to you."

"Yet you are going to leave me?"

"Oh, w'at can I do?"

Helen thought rapidly. She remembered her letter downstairs which would be dispatched presently; results from it might be expected, in the shape of averted faces of friends and diminished lists of better-class patients, in two or three days, after the Committee had sat. Why not, then, tell Jacqueline now? She had judged Jacqueline very largely by herself; she guessed that the girl would be safer, even happier, with her than living the woman parasite's lonely life. She looked at her soft beauty which even her paroxysms of grief had not greatly devastated, and caught her breath sharply in feministic horror at letting Jacqueline, with all her charm, all her naïve attempts to "be good," go out to the soul-hungry, body-sated life of the streets. She made up her mind quickly, conscious that very possibly Jacqueline was not worth it; conscious that she was probably, in spite of her attacks of doglike devotion, designed by nature for the sensuous, non-sensual courtesan of the twentieth century—but she could not let her go without one more grab.

"Jacqueline," she said, quietly, "if you really love me—supposing I tell you that I need you very dreadfully just now as my friend?"

Jacqueline stared at her and laughed shrilly.

"You need me, Madame? Ah, no! You 'ave friends, work,—M. Farne, and der *prêtre* when he are well again."

"Yes, but listen, my dear," she said, taking the girl's hand in her own and trying to arrest her attention. "Very soon I shall have no friends except, perhaps, Dr. Farne. Very soon much of my work will be stopped, and as for Mr. Reay, he will never come out of the hospital again——"

"But why?"

Jacqueline was obviously astonished now.

"He is very ill. He will live for many years, getting worse—and he does not know me."

"His brain 'ave com' mad?"

"Yes."

"Oh, Madame. I am *triste!* But your friends? It lov' you?"

"Jacqueline, my dear, I shall have none of them much longer. Listen! In June I shall have a child."

Jacqueline's mouth opened wide, and her eyes imitated it as she gasped:

"But I did not know you are married!"

"I'm not!"

The girl stared at her spellbound, waiting to see her look ashamed, waiting for the flush, the downcast eyes that, in her mind, ought to accompany such a statement. But Helen looked at her sadly and steadily, as she went on:

"Oh no, I'm not ashamed of it. And I'm not exactly proud of it. It was a rather unnecessary piece of folly, I suppose, after all. But, you see, Jacqueline, you can be my friend now. You know how awful it is to have people against you! I shall have no relations, now—and we shall probably be very much poorer soon. But—will you stay with me, instead of going to find a rich man?"

She looked at the girl anxiously, ridiculously hopeful of her reply. It had cost her a great effort to speak.

The girl stared, too amazed to speak, until she jerked out:

"Is et M. Farne, or der *prêtre?*"

Helen hesitated. She wished Jacqueline had guessed without asking; it was unlike her *finesse* to be so clumsy.

"Of course it was not Dr. Farne."

Jacqueline laughed shrilly again, and cried:

"Mon Dieu! And I 'ave lov' you, and try copy you because I t'ink you are clean woman!"

"I certainly don't feel any different, Jacqueline," said Helen, with a short laugh. "And I certainly haven't done my work less well."

But Jacqueline did not listen to that. Once again she laughed, and sprung from the bed. There was something horrifyingly cynical to Helen in the way in which she let the silk kimono slip apart, as though she no longer cared to be ordinarily modest before her.

"When I first com' in your 'ouse I t'ink, 'Des *docteur* woman cannot be clean woman because she trait me like friend, when all der time she know I am dirty girl.' I watch you long time. I see you 'elp lot dirty people, and lov' it. Very slowly I t'ink you are saint! I t'ink I like pray to you! Mon Dieu, Mon Dieu! W'at *bêtise!*"

"Why, Jacqueline, my dear," began Helen, her eyes full of tears.

But Jacqueline had gone over to the long mirror and, slipping her shoulders out of the kimono with a little, graceful shrug, was surveying herself calculatingly.

"I am good girl eight, nine mont' because I t'ink you are good! I tap, tap, tap der *sacré* teep-wrating machine till my 'eart are brok'. Now I know why you 'elp all des dirty people! You lov' it because you are dirty woman too! Oh, des *sacré* Engleesh! I go! I waste eight, nine mont'. To-morrow I am in London, away from des dirty workin' class der people. I 'ate it—and I 'ate you because you are not sincere wit' me. You look like saint! All der time you are dirty woman—and wit' *prêtre!*"

She laughed loudly, dreadfully.

"I never thought you'd be like this, Jacqueline," said Helen, white-lipped, as she walked towards the door.

"You t'ink I stay wit' you? Two dirty woman in one 'ouse, and one *secret* dirty woman? I am not soch beeg fool! *Aussi*, you nevaire 'ave *monnaie*. You give to all who *crie* to you! To-morrow I go wit' May. She are *honnête*, not hy-pocrise! Soon I be *riche!* *Bonjour*, Shellpeet!"

Helen went down the stairs crying. The tide had turned; it was coming in more rapidly, more hurtfully, than she had expected.

Maud was standing in the hall; her face looked thunderous, her lips were pouting, as they always were when she had anything on her mind. Helen fought an entirely unreasonable desire to quarrel, and let it master her. Gulping back her tears, though her eyes still glistened, she said sharply:

"Maud, if you realized how very much prettier you are, and

how very much pleasanter it is for me when you smile, you'd do it oftener!"

Maud stood by the drawing-room door, looking down at the hem of her starched apron.

"I heard what you—and she was saying."

"You did?" asked Helen, coldly, with a sudden intense regret that she had not married Louis and saved herself all this, and an uneasy certainty that, should the door open at this minute and admit him she would give way completely and ask him to get a special licence to-morrow. But the door did not open, and she shook herself impatiently.

"Well?" she asked. "What are you going to do about it?"

"I—I——" began the girl.

Something else occurred to Helen.

"You read my letter, I suppose?"

Maud's face was crimson; she felt that things were not at all as they should be. Here was a "fallen woman" putting her in the wrong, and making her feel horribly uncomfortable. She stiffened her backbone, conscious of virtue.

"When I heard what you said—I thought I ought to find out all I could," she mumbled. "I have to look after myself."

"I think I said enough," said Helen, "don't you?"

"I've got to protect myself!" said Maud, stubbornly.

"I'm not contagious," said Helen, flippantly, and once more resisted an almost overwhelming impulse to run to the hospital and stay with Louis.

"I'm sorry," muttered Maud. "I must leave here—like Lot!"

"Of course, that's as you like, Maud. Do you mean to-night?"

"I should feel as if the roof would come down on me!" she said.

"Oh no! I'm not nearly important enough to cause earthquakes and thunders, Maud! But go if you're afraid of me."

"If I go to-night, can I have my boxes?" she asked, earnestly.

"Of course! What on earth should I want with your boxes?"

"Sometimes they keep them if you leave without notice," said Maud, and turned aside for Helen to pass her.

She went into the drawing-room, read her letter again, and stamped and sealed it. Then she rang the bell. She had to ring it three times before Maud came in, already wearing her hat and coat.

"Will you take this letter to the post for me, Maud? I thought you might like to."

Maud took it between finger and thumb. She looked far from happy.

"Where shall you sleep to-night?" asked Helen, relenting as she realized that this was a complete upheaval of the girl's life, and that she was, quite sincerely, horrified to know she had been living with two fallen women.

"With my friend—the one who calls for me to go to Sunday School," said Maud, her voice shaking. Then she burst out: "Dr. Clevion, you'd be surprised how upset I feel! I've always had the feeling that—that *she* wasn't much good, and I wisht you'd have told me about her before, so that I need not have brought myself to associate with her. But you—I've always thought there was only the one thing lacking in you—if only you'd been a believer!" She added, under her breath, "Even though you do smoke!"

"I can't discuss it with you, Maud," said Helen, coldly. "You had better take your month's money."

She went into the consulting-room to her desk to write a cheque. Maud waited at the door for it.

"There are three insurance stamps wanted on my card," she volunteered. Helen laid the three coins on top of the cheque.

"Thank you, m'm," said Maud. "I—I do feel upset," she added, her voice shaking again.

"That doesn't get us very far, does it?"

"I—I can't help it—but I shall always remember you in my prayers," she said, crying into her handkerchief.

"That will be very good for both of us. Good-night, Maud. You'll shut the door, please, and don't forget to post my letter."

The door closed. Upstairs Helen could hear Jacqueline bumping things into her valise, sitting down so hurriedly that

the chair creaked along the floor, getting up again just as hurriedly.

Helen, feeling that physical action would be calming, went into the kitchen to make coffee. The room was uncannily clean; the texts on the walls and the calendar beside the mantelpiece smelled of Maud. As she waited for the kettle to boil, her foot tapping impatiently on the fender, her eyes strayed to the text for the day.

"Charity suffereth long and is kind; charity thinketh no evil, is not puffed up." She laughed as she read it. Then she went to the door and called Jacqueline.

The door opened.

"I've made some coffee, Jacqueline. Will you have some? Maud has gone; she's frightened of us."

"I want not'ing, t'ank you, Mademoiselle," she called.

The door closed again; it was the first time she had not called her the more formal "Madame."

Helen carried her coffee into the consulting-room and rang up Louis.

"That you, Louis? I hope you weren't in bed. I've written to Parmoor, and asked him to tell the Committee. And I've told Jacqueline. No, it isn't so silly as it sounds. I had to tell her. I'm beginning to think I'm not much of a psychologist after all. Jacqueline has started to pack; she's going to London to-morrow to go on the streets. And Maud has gone too. Frightened the roof would fall in on her! I said an idiotic thing to her—I said I wasn't catching! Fancy being flippant when I was so miserable! It all strikes me so irresistibly as being like a pack of cards! If one wobbles, down comes the lot! Louis, it's going to be hell! It was all I could do to prevent myself from dashing out of the house and asking you to marry me. I almost wish I had now—but I wouldn't, for anything. But I'm telling you, to put you on your guard. If I should happen to see you when I'm in one of these funking moods, for God's sake begin to *manage* me, will you? and I shall be cured!"

She listened to him for a while, her face softening.

"Louis," she said, after a few moments, "you ought to know

better than say nice things to me now! You wouldn't if you could see me. I'm just going to bed to howl like hell. Good-night."

She heard no more, for she buried her face in the hard, slippery couch and cried till she could cry no more, while Jacqueline's wooden sandals went clatter-clatter-clatter above her head.

CHAPTER XX

HELEN explained to Mrs. Watkins next day that Maud had left unexpectedly; she asked her to carry on alone until some help could be found. It had occurred to her that probably Mrs. Schlegel, who was still looking for work, might be glad to come to her, and she sent a note along to her at Martin's Street inviting her to come to see her. She guessed that Mrs. Schlegel's amateur efforts would not approach Maud's cool, perfect efficiency; but that scarcely seemed to count now.

She was having breakfast, with the *Lancet* propped in front of her, while she read a paper by Crichton Browne on Psychotherapy. She wondered how she could tactfully offer some money to Jacqueline for her fare to London. She heard a taxi drive up to the door and Mrs. Watkins admitting someone; she thought she heard the visitor being shown into the waiting-room. But there was a knock at the dining-room door and Mr. Parmoor, elbowing Mrs. Watkins out of the way, came in.

"Why, Mr. Parmoor," began Helen, standing up, her face rather pink. "How early you are! I haven't had breakfast yet."

"I come as soon as I'd took in your letter, doctor," he said.

She looked at him with curiosity; though he had evidently hurried, he was just as evidently dressed with some special end in view. On his red hands were two large, vulgar rings: his fur coat, opened with careful carelessness, showed the sable lining; across his wide white waistcoat a heavy gold chain, with many danglements of various kinds, was stretched. A big pearl pin gleamed in his brightly striped tie.

"Have you had breakfast?" she asked.

"I wouldn't say no to a cup o' coffee, doctor," he said, mopping his fat pink face.

She rang for a cup, and waited in silence until it was

brought; then she filled it, conscious that he was watching her thin hands as though they fascinated him.

"What makes your 'ands like that?" he asked, jerkily.

"How?" she asked, holding them up in front of her.

"Like—like they are!" he said, awkwardly.

"Oh, lots of scrubbing and occasional boiling in antiseptics, I suppose," she said, smiling.

"Three loomps, please," he said, as she moved the *Lancet*, folded it and went on unconcernedly eating her toast and marmalade.

"Why, you're ruinous! If ever you come to tea or breakfast with me, Mr. Parmoor, you must certainly bring your own sugar!"

"By goom, you're a calm one," he said, admiringly.

She smiled at him in a friendly way that still further amazed him.

"So you got my letter? The posts are improving!"

He wiped his damp face again.

"Won't you take off your coat? It looks very hot."

"Never bin so oopset in me life, doctor, never. I suppose it's a kid?"

She nodded, her eyes trying to look quizzical, while her teeth were clenched so tightly that she could not speak.

"By goom!" he cried, holding out a fist like a ham. "I'll break the—the—'is neck! 'As 'e chucked yo'?"

She laughed.

"Now can you imagine a man being allowed to chuck me, Mr. Parmoor? No, it's just impossible for us to marry, that's all," she said coolly. "But my personal side of the matter doesn't come into it. I am only concerned in how my—my resignation will affect the Housing Committee."

"Boot look 'ere, doctor!" he said, panting a little, and wiping his face again with the magenta silk handkerchief as his small eyes blinked. "To 'ell with the 'Ousing Committee. It's you as I'm thinking of! Lord 'elp us, don't begin to think as I'm a bloomin' Pharisee! I don't say as I could, meself, throw a brick ower every workh'use wall wi'out being in danger of

'itting one of me own. I don't say as I havena bin a bit of a dog in me time."

"Oh, good heavens!" she cried, and became helpless with laughter at the idea of Mr. Parmoor's fellow-feeling for her.

But he did not see her amusement. He was too much absorbed by the business in hand.

"Well, I can tell yo', doctor, the first thing I thought when I got your letter this morning was—some bloody swine, if yo'll forgive my 'eated words—'as wronged the purest little woman God ever made! The purest and the brainiest, by goom! So I said to my sister, 'Maria,' I said, 'there's a wrong bin doon, and John Parmoor's the man to right it!' So while she brushed my 'at and my fur coat I spruced myself up a bit, and here I am. Look 'ere, Dr. Clevion, you'll make me a proud man to-day if yo'll marry me and tak' my name. I don't care for no man i' Shellpit, an' if they say as it's me got yo' into trouble, I don't give a brass nail!"

He stood up, his warm pink face quivering with splendid emotion.

Helen wanted to laugh, but something caught at her throat and changed the laughter to a desire to cry. All this kindness, where she had expected stones! Blundering, clumsy, fumbling kindness, but kindness none the less real! He was offering her all he had, just as she had offered her all to Francis! And how could she begin to standardize? She glimpsed something knightly in funny little pink, warm Parmoor, just as she had seen it in Louis last night. The primitive male offering her his protection from the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune, not recognizing that she had got past the primitive and must fight for herself.

"There now, don't speak yet," he said, watching her face, unable to understand what it mirrored. "I guess it comes with a bit of a start at first. But I'm a good judge of a woman, I am! As good a judge as I am of a beast, any day. There's not a better judge i' the cattle market than John Parmoor, else he'd never 'ave built up six shops out o' one little pork-butcher's!"

Then she found her words and her composed voice.

"Mr. Parmoor," she said, looking at him reflectively, "I think you're one of the nicest old men I ever met! But I can't begin even to think about your proposal."

He stared at her.

"But don't yo' see as I'm takin' all the responsibility—an' blackenin' meself?" he stuttered.

"I do! That's why I think you're so nice," she said, quickly. "But can't I make you see that I want to take the responsibility myself? And I don't in the least want to be married!"

"Well, by goom!" he cried, mopping his agitated face. "And to think as I were picturing you cryin' your eyes up, begging of some fellow to make a honest woman of you! It was that as got me back oop! I couldn't stick it, thinking of you kowtowing to any man—so proud and independent and sharp-tongued as yo' are!"

Again that queer, unexpected vision of knightliness! Her eyes were very soft as she said:

"Well, I didn't! I haven't mentioned it to him! And he'll never know. I can see it all through alone, but I quite realize that the Housing Committee might be unpleasant about it unless I resigned at once."

As she spoke she shivered in self-disgust to think of herself unvaliant, crying last night after Maud had gone.

He stood on the hearthrug, agitatedly going two paces to the right and back again.

"Boot look 'ere, doctor! Won't you reconsider your decision? Look 'ere, I'm not the man to go castin' it oop at yo', like some! You ought for know John Parmoor better nor that! An' after all, we could work well i' double 'arness! There's the Committee! There'd be no call for you to resign if you was Mrs. John Parmoor. And they'll be asking me to be Mayor next year; besides, me being a butcher an' you a doctor, you might say as we understand each other a bit—though I must say as I never go near the slaughter-houses nowadays."

He looked so naïve, so much in earnest, that she stooped over the fire to hide her uncontrollable giggle at that. He

thought she was emotional. He came a little nearer, speaking in lowered tones.

"You know, I've the reputation of bein' a pretty warm man, Dr. Clevion. Six shops—the best butcher's business as here an' there one, I can tell you. And—this is on the strict q.t., mind you!—nex' committee I'm going to propose as we buy all that land round Weaver's Hollow, joinin' on to the New Shellpit estate. I don't mind tellin' you as I've had me north eye on it a long time now, and I've got a friend o' mine i' Manchester to buy it for me in his name. Of course it wouldna do for me to appear, because, as yo' can guess, I'm going to stick out for the Committee to buy it, an' he'll stick out for 'is price. Twig?"

He looked at her hopefully, complacently, as he volunteered this last seductive bit of overweight. But something in her face told his quick mind that it had been a mistake. He added, impulsively:

"An' every penny o' profit yo' make out of it yo' shall 'ave for yourself!"

Something inside her rose to boiling-point as this aspect of marriage dawned upon her—this mutual rooking of the community by married people! This large-handed distribution of largess by a man! She knelt on the hearthrug, poking viciously at the fire as she thought out something completely scathing; but before it came lightning-swift comprehension overtook and passed it. After all, it was his women-folk's fault that his mind worked so!

She got up from the hearth and sat down calmly, placing the tips of her fingers together with precision and looking at them interestedly. He stood above her, watching her eagerly.

"It's no use, Mr. Parmoor," she said, quietly. "I thoroughly appreciate all you have said, and all your offer holds out. But it's not a scrap of use. I loathe the thought of marriage. Every word you say makes me loathe it more and more, not on your account but on my own. It's an impossible position for a woman, marriage! My present position is far preferable, I think. Perhaps I shan't think so in a few months' time. But never mind that. It's just as futile for us

to go on discussing this as it would be for you to take a vegetarian into your shop and try to tempt him by chunks of liver and raw beef! Don't you worry a scrap more about me, there's a good man! You will see that I'm perfectly able to worry about myself! Read my letter on Thursday, and tell them just what you think best. I can rely on you to make it nicer than it is!"

"It'll break me oop!" he said, and she felt very sorry for him.

"Oh no, it won't. Mr. Parmoor, if you knew me well you'd be thankful to Heaven for preserving you from marrying me! I'd give you the devil of a time——"

"I love your sharp tongue!" he said wistfully, "like 'orse-radish sauce!"

"You'd soon be tired of it. Especially if it were directed against you! Besides, I'd ruin you! I'd take all your money and spend it, and you'd just sit there wishing you were dead! And every time you got cross the horseradish would get into your eyes and make you blink! Poor man! Can't you see what a lucky escape you've had? And now I must run away. My practice hasn't begun to go off yet."

He felt himself dismissed, and, as he was dismissed, his admiration and respect for her as a fighter grew, mingling with a choky-throated pity for her—the pity of the sentimental, middle-aged man who has had considerable experience in mild, illicit and very fluffy sex affairs, with their accompanying tears and contretemps and haplessness. He went towards the door and came back as she very ostentatiously took up the *Daily News*. She looked at him with patient inquiry. His hot, pink face began to grow hotter, pinker.

"Look 'ere, doctor. You're breakin' me oop, you know. I can't abide to think of you 'ere—like this. If you won't let me 'ave a 'and in 'elping you, why don't you 'elp yourself?"

"Just what I'm going to do! What do you mean, exactly?"

"Look 'ere, being a doctor, you know all the tricks of the trade, don't you?" he went on.

"If there *are* any tricks," she said, smiling, wondering if he

were going to offer her a fabulous sum for a prescription to reduce his waist-line, or something of the sort.

"Well, all I c'n say is, if I was a doctor, I'm jiggered if I'd 'ave a kid that was goin' to muck me life! You must know all the things people c'd take—or do——"

She stared at him, her eyes narrowing, her face as pink as his. Once more her boiling flood of indignation seemed about to burst; once more she effected the supreme triumph of the psychologist, put herself in his place, saw his reasoning and all that had gone to the making up of his code.

"Yes, there are probably plenty of tricks, as you call them, Mr. Parmoor. But don't you see that it's exactly the fact that I know them that makes it impossible for me to use them? Lord, if you give knowledge into the hands of people who use it for their own ends, what's the good of anything?"

"I think you're a fool," he said.

"Do you? So do I. I have an idea that I'm being a bit priggish and stuffy, too. But that's the cussed nature of the beast! Now do run away! And don't forget that I think you're a dear old thing!"

He went out, completely staggered. He could not begin to grasp her code. But that afternoon, by some obscure psychological process induced by thinking of her, he neglected to have the meat that was going "off" made into sausages and saveloys. Instead he sent it in one of his motor vans to some dozen poor families in Lower Shellpit. In the evening, in a pleasant glow, he sat down in the little dusty office behind the original old pork-butcher's shop to write a letter to the Housing Committee offering to give the Weaver's Hollow Estate to the town. Re-reading the letter he got a splendid warmth from its generosity. He saw the Committee Room—the long table, the strange collection of faces round it. Above it was the great oil painting of Alfred Dimmock, who had given the land to make the Park many years ago; at the other side of the room was a painting in oils of the man who had brought the potting industry to the district, to the little valley he had christened Napoli. And underneath it the Chairman's chair! On Thursday it would be empty!

For a long time he sat thinking; his mind became a battleground. Trade—that acute juggling with copper by which it was sublimated into gold! Dreams! The Garden City! Helen's defiant face as she sat so calmly in her chair while a sea of troubles lapped about her feet, coming to overwhelm her while she scorned their power! Dreams——

“Maybe it's eddication makes 'em like that!” he thought, with knitted brow. And it came to him that education had made a class apart, with a different code, a different humanity which he was not called upon to share. He looked at the letter again, read it again and liked his phrasing. It was a pity to waste the sensation that letter would cause! But after a long time it was crumpled up, thrown into the old waste-paper basket, taken out again, re-read and then safely burnt. And once again he sat still, thinking. Presently his pen in his hand began to make calculations; how much meat had he sent to those people in Lower Shellpit? He jotted it down—put it through a mental mincing machine, calculated its value in pounds of sausages.

“By goom, John Parmoor, she was right! She'd ruin you if it went on!” he said, and, shutting down the lid of his dream box, went into the parlour to have his supper.

CHAPTER XXI

THE letter to the Committee and Maud's tongue between them soon set scandal in motion; some of it travelled to Helen's ears: much of it was mercifully lost because she refused to listen. Mrs. Tappan cut her in the street the following week. She had a heart-broken letter from one of the Tappan girls saying that she had been forbidden to visit her "darling doctor" again, and must not even bow to her in the street; whatever had she done, and would she pick Muriel up in her car and have a talk with her in secret one day when she could elude the vigilant mater? Helen wrote to her with considerable grief—a little ameliorated by the fact that Muriel's loves were not very deep.

"My dear little girl," she wrote, "we mustn't go against the mater's wishes, must we? I have done something unforgivable according to her code, and, after all, she is only trying to take care of you. Your sympathy and your kindness are very dear to me, but to love people you don't need to see them every day, do you?"

Several members of the Housing Committee wrote to her saying that her resignation was a quixotic, but very honourable thing, and assuring her of their sympathy and respect. As the Committee was composed entirely of men, she had expected that; as Parmoor had so naïvely admitted, there were not very many men who could afford to throw the stones ordered by the Mosaic law; moreover, men seemed to see all the abstractions of a problem, while women saw only one damning, concrete fact in it. But she noticed bitterly that, that same week, their letters were among a sheaf of others, some polite, some charming, and full of excuses, others frigidly business-like, and one or two insulting, asking for her account. She had expected that too. A man might not object to being

identified in business or even friendship with a woman who had taken the moral bit between her teeth; but ancient, patriarchal law made him protect his wives and daughters from her.

One day, later, the Rector called to see her. It was just when the bright shine of the house had worn off under Mrs. Schlegel's incompetent efforts. He was very portentous, prepared to be helpful, and very irritating. As she saw his face and remembered that he was to have married her and Francis, she was seized with one of her recent uncontrollable desires to sit and weep loudly and wetly. In consequence, she was unnecessarily rude. As they talked about Francis, and what the Bishop said about him, a child cried in the kitchen. He started nervously, and looked round as if he expected to see babies under every chair.

"Have you—er—or—ah?" he began, awkwardly, and coughed.

"No!" she snapped. "I haven't made a habit of it. That child belongs to my maid."

Mr. Tappan made a spasmodic movement towards his hat that was on the floor beside him. It seemed a lifebuoy.

"Imagine the awful uninterestingness of cleaning someone else's house all day, when you've a child of your own boarded out, miles away! No anchor—nothing. Poor girl! It's simply asking her to drift to immorality!"

"These people ought not to be pandered to," he said, and coughed again as he remembered the altogether incredible fact that he was talking—having tea!—with one of them. He had been simply helpless in Helen's hands—he sought feverishly for his dignity and his principles.

"The only way to stop sin is to punish it severely. I, if I had my way, would segregate the immoral——"

"Lord! wherever would you put them?" she asked, with her quizzical look that made the Rector always think she was laughing at him. "What on earth's the good of segregating them? All my training makes me aim at curing them by removing the cause of their immorality. Though sometimes it seems an idiopathic disease, you know——"

"Oh, quite, quite, quite," he said, hurriedly. And she was

wickedly delighted to think that he did not know what she meant. "Education—non-*secular* education—our father's simple faith——"

"Have you ever been into a chemical laboratory, Mr. Tappan?" she said suddenly.

"In my day this craze for science had not seized on the schools. Classics——" he said blandly.

"Um—simple faith may do in translating Homer and Vergil. But take it into a chemical laboratory or an operating theatre and see what happens! Simple faith! The cowardliest, sloppiest, laziest thing ever invented!"

"My dear young lady! How are you going to cure the sick soul except by faith?" he cried, and once again forgot that this was a pastoral visit to an erring sheep.

"I neither know nor care! For me souls don't matter a brass farthing! I want to tackle their bodies—and if I make a good job of them, there won't be any immorality left in their souls for you to cure! I look upon immorality as"—here she coughed, and her eyes lighted with mischief as she became unfairly technical, considering that he had confessed to an uneasy scorn for science—"as—a highly infectious disease that has become pandemic. You think the Church can cure it by floggings and stone-throwing and segregating and starving your patients. I don't. I look upon it as a sort of typhoid fever almost—— Why don't you leave it to doctors to cure it?"

He shook his head; he could not find words yet, for the stock phrases only made her laugh.

"Or, why don't you take a leaf out of the doctor's book if you really want to do the job yourselves? I mean—isolate the immorality bacillus, and get an antitoxin?"

He did not know what to say, and went away genuinely grieved by her unbecoming spirit of levity, and genuinely worried about the state of the world when science was given into the irresponsible hands of women. He left her glowing from her fight; but the glow soon had a dull reaction.

Miss Wembley's visit was the hardest of all to bear. She came one day when Helen was first beginning to feel the physical as well as the spiritual effects of her position; she

looked a little thinner, her face was pinched, her eyes darkly ringed. Miss Wembley sat down on the edge of a chair in which, so many months before, she had sat when her soul was sick, and Helen, in spite of her scornful remarks to the Rector about people's souls, had cured it. She talked of Francis, of Mrs. Schlegel, of many things, playing with her furs, twitching nervously at her fine linen handkerchief. At last, a soft flush on her delicate cheek, she half whispered:

"My dear, I am hearing such things! As your friend I had to come and tell you—and ask you if they are true. But—if they are, there must be some reason. I could never think you are anything but good and pure."

"If you have heard that I'm going to have a child—yes, that's quite true," said Helen, calmly. "I've been rude, and horrid to everyone who mentioned it. But I can't be horrid to you. Yes, there is—or was—a reason, and some extenuation. I don't want to talk about it, but I will, rather than risk losing your friendship."

"There isn't any need to talk about it! I don't understand it a bit. But I know you—there's one thing, though. Do you remember the first time I came to see you, and we talked about the things that were making havoc of my life?"

Helen nodded, waiting.

"You said then, that those things that seemed so golden and shining in people's lives were really not so very splendid—common stuff—not worth while to spoil your life because you had missed them——"

"I know I did."

"Were you wrong?" Miss Wembley spoke a little breathlessly.

"A thousand times No! I was right, Miss Wembley! I spoke then from theory. I had never loved. Later, when I loved, I—I—lost the tenderness that should never be separated from love, and—and got greedy for that golden thrill you and I had talked about."

"Don't tell me if it's painful," murmured Miss Wembley.

"Of course it's painful, but I must tell you. Miss Wembley, I—sort of struggled for—all that thrill part of it. And it

wasn't worth it. Even if there had been none of this aftermath it wasn't worth it. Human beings mustn't lose themselves like that in the rush after a thing so narrowly personal as sexual love. I've found that out now. It kills tenderness—pity. It's a fierce, terrible thing. If we're going to admit it at all in our lives, it's got to be *en passant*. Then it's very beautiful, and very helpful. If you let it get hold of you it's a bit like the bees——”

Miss Wembley looked blank. Helen felt ridiculously detached and informative as she went on:

“The queen bee chooses a mate, you know—goes on a nuptial flight with him, and a few minutes later the dead husk of his body comes dropping out of the blue summer sky. It's ripped him—hollow! That's what it does to most of us—this wretched flight of passion——”

Miss Wembley sat thinking for a while.

“I'm glad I came,” she said, at last. “I thought it was not, perhaps, the right of a friend to pry, but I have believed in you so much; your sanity has meant so much to me that I was feeling everything rather crumbling beneath me. I've had such peace this past year——”

Helen shivered. Again the house of cards! She leaned across and touched Miss Wembley's arm, looking at her with unusual solemnity.

“I'm glad you came, too. It's terrible to me that we should let our lives be ruled by what others do. It seems to me that we've to face things out for ourselves, set a course of action and abide by it whatever it costs us, without troubling what others say or think. I was sane—that time you came to me. Then I wavered. Francis had set himself an ideal, and found he had been wrong—doubly wrong—about it. He wavered. I was wrong to waver from my straight course. I know it now. But I've got back.”

“And you've suffered,” came Miss Wembley's voice.

“It's taken away much of my work; it's made a pretty considerable earthquake in several people's lives—— But I'm glad you're not more hurt by it.”

“I should have been if I hadn't summoned up all my

courage and come to-day. Now I feel stronger than ever. You are so brave."

"Don't run away with the idea that I'm brave, Miss Wembley! I'm not in the least brave! If you only knew how my snobbish pride gets lacerated every day! And how I miss the respect, and the friendliness! And my work! Sometimes I think I'll not be able to bear it another minute."

"But you do, and no one knows you suffer much. They all think you're hard, except those who think you're brave."

"I'm neither, if they only knew it! But pain's like certain drugs—you can take it in progressive doses. What would kill you at first doesn't touch you after a while."

Miss Wembley went shopping on her way home, and spent much of her time after that in sewing—delicate, soft sewing of fine linen things which she packed away afterwards with lavender, and folded and refolded, and tied up in blue ribbons with many a soft little sigh and many a breathed prayer.

As time drew on to March the sea of troubles seemed to be coming in faster, more furious. Helen was beginning to feel the physical strain of long hours now, for, though the Upper Shellpit practice was non-existent, the Sharlock Street surgery was filled to overflowing night and morning. She did her work at the hospital in the afternoons now. Towards the end of March she had a letter from her landlord, the people's churchwarden and a member of the Housing Committee. He had had a good offer to let his house to a very desirable tenant—a new doctor who was to work in partnership with Dr. Williams—to whom Helen's patients had gone—there was simply not a house in the district vacant; hers, near the church, in the best residential district, already structurally adapted to a doctor's requirements, etc. etc., was exactly what Dr. Haverford was needing, and would she, in view of recent unfortunate occurrences, like to dispose of her lease?

Once again she felt that she would fight it out. He could not turn her out for five years—but——

She talked it over with Louis that afternoon.

"As a matter of fact, I want to stay there only because I object to being turned out. That's all. For honestly I

can't afford it," she said, and sat back in her chair suddenly. She had not meant to let that out. She had been bringing her troubles to him less and less lately, feeling that she must fight them out for herself. But here was certainly a case in which two heads would be better than one.

"Human cussedness certainly says don't be turned out. But I've been thinking of it before, and wondering how I dare mention it. You've got so prickly lately! How would you like a resident post here? I've to get another assistant——"

"Yes, and it can't be me," she said, simply. "You're an old dear to suggest it, but it's simply silly. I'd be no use. Besides, I'm sure old Cranmare wouldn't like it. They'll all know my abandoned story soon—if Nurse Walters hasn't already talked, though somehow I think she hasn't."

"I know she hasn't," he said.

"Good! But it can't be hidden much longer. I'd love being here with you, but we've got to deal with this matter unsentimentally, haven't we?"

"Then what do you propose to do?" said Louis, frowning once again at his own helplessness.

"I'll tell you. I shall sell most of the furniture and go and live in Sharlock Street."

"Helen, what utter nonsense! You'd die in that awful den!"

"Oh no, I shan't. I've been thinking of this plan for quite a time now. Mrs. Winnocks is seventy this week, and gets her old age pension; she feels her life is a bit too strenuous, and there's a married daughter in the country somewhere who will take the old people, both of them. So you see, even in the midst of a housing problem, a house falls into my lap!"

"But a slum hovel!" he protested.

"It won't be a slum hovel when I've done with it! The difficulty will be a bath—I'll come here daily and borrow yours, I think! It won't be till July. I've got young Guy Hardwicke coming as *locum*. He wants a first-hand taste of slums and their ways for some sociological book he's writing. I heard from him to-day. Miss Wembley is going to let him stay with her, and he can do his work from the surgery——"

He looked at her reflectively as he tapped a cigarette on his hand and lighted it.

"Seems to me, Helen, that you only come to ask for advice when you've settled everything," he said at last.

"I know I do. You see, you make exactly the objections I've been making to myself, but when I argue with myself I'm not nearly so convincing. When I argue with you I have to be so confoundedly sane and subtle that I convince myself!"

"Well, then, there's nothing more to be said. But I don't agree with it a scrap."

"Neither do I!" she said, with one of her jerky little laughs. "But it's the only thing. And now another difficulty crops up."

He looked across at her, wondering if anything could quell her. But she sat there looking supremely untouched; she seemed to flinch a little at the slings and arrows, and next moment they had glanced, unharmed, from her—little things happened, were bowed to, conceded a place; she seemed to carry an armour and a secret that nothing could touch.

"I'm wondering," came her quiet voice, breaking in casually on his reflection, "where to put myself in March. Relations are barred of course. I could go to a nursing home. But that means a wedding ring, and wholesale lies. Can you suggest anything? I might take a cottage and bury myself. But you know how terrified I am of being alone with Helen Clevion——"

He looked at her and saw that she was genuinely at sea this time. He answered quickly, as the idea struck him.

"Why the very thing. Go up to Scotland, where my boy lives——"

She looked doubtful.

"Oh, but—it's your wife's people, isn't it? I'd need to lie——"

"You certainly wouldn't! They are the most completely incurious folks I ever knew; mostly fisher-folk. And, Helen, I'm dying for you to see the boy, and tell me all about him——"

She looked at him in surprise: it was impossible to imagine Louis in the rôle of proud parent.

He wrote to Lashnagar that night, while she was there, a few days later she had a letter from Miss Lashcairn, written very blackly, with a thick pen:

"DEAR DR. CLEVION,

"Louis has been telling me that you're ill and needing rest and change. You'd get it here. We're very quiet folks, but we'd be very pleased to welcome you. I ought to add that it's bleak here, and you'd do well to bring your warmest clothing. If you will let us know when you are coming, we'll send a machine to meet you at Carlossie, the nearest station.

"Yours sincerely,

"JANET LASHCAIRN."

This letter, with its lack of gush, was just what Helen needed. But she was not at all sure that Louis had prepared Miss Lashcairn for what to expect. So, without giving herself time to repent she wrote immediately:

"DEAR MISS LASHCAIRN,

"The kindness of your letter makes me hasten to ask you if you know why I want to come to Lashnagar? I can't think that Louis told you I am going to have a child in June, and am not married. If you can have me knowing this I shall be so glad to come.

"Yours sincerely,

"HELEN CLEVION."

Miss Lashcairn's reply was prompt and, Helen was to find, characteristic:

"DEAR DR. CLEVION,

"I have found in nearly eighty years of life that it's not what you do, but what you are too cowardly to do that spoils your life. Yes, Louis told me all about you when he wrote. We're great folks at minding our own business, and we've a code of morals that is rather savage and very natural. Please come. We never see anyone."

So, very thankfully, she arranged to go.

During all the autumn and winter she saw Francis four or five times a week; quite often he did not know her. As Louis had predicted, the periods of exaltation and of depression grew more prolonged. On several occasions he told her of pains in his hands and feet. On the April evening when she came through sunshine and a glittering shower of opal rain-drops to say good-bye to him, she had a longer talk than usual.

"You look very tired," he said to her, when she went along the bricked path towards the pine grove where tiny green tassels showed the budding new life in the tree. He had been standing with old Carnelly beneath the tree where, last year, he had seen the Holy Spirit in the light playing on the leaves, but he left him at once when he saw Helen. "I am tired too," he added.

"Shall we sit down there, under the trees? I am going away. I want to say good-bye."

"There is a strange dulness," he went on, as he sat down stiffly on the seat beneath the pine tree. "Do you think it was His left side that they pierced?"

"I don't know." The words were very soft, like the dropping of the April rain from the branches; there was the shake of tears in her voice.

"My left side is dull, and heavy—and my arm. I think it was His left side——"

"Francis," she said, holding his thin hand, trying to make him say something to which she could hold, "I am going away to-morrow for a long time."

He frowned and passed his hand over his forehead.

"If only I could tell you my message before you go——"

He tried desperately to remember, but shook his head again and again.

"Francis," she said again, almost desperately, though she knew it was all in vain, "I don't want to go. I have to leave all my work."

The word arrested him, and he looked at her vaguely.

"I have finished the work Thou gavest me to do," he

murmured, and she bent her head to listen. "Finished? How old are you?"

"Thirty-two."

"He was thirty-three."

She sighed softly, and the light breeze in the trees, answering her, sent down a shower of raindrops upon them. He sat stroking his beard with his white hand; she stood up, and led him into the house talking cheerfully about his new purple cassock.

Louis was busy in one of the houses; she sat still, thinking thought away. The past few weeks had been so rushed that she had been conscious of nothing but utter tiredness; now that the rush was over she felt collapsed. The furniture had been sold—most of it Dr. Haverford had bought as it stood. A few of her happiest pictures she had saved for her Sharlock Street front room, which, still clinging to her passionate desire to bring beauty into Lower Shellpit, she made as beautiful as the surrounding atmosphere would let her. It was to be her waiting-room. The floor was covered with linoleum: the skirting boards were planed and enameled; she kept her most comfortable chairs and had them covered in brightly flowered washable chintz. She felt that her patients should be welcomed as friends in the best drawing-room she could provide.

Louis came in; he had ordered dinner early so that they could have an orgy of talk for the last time. But at dinner she was plunged in gloomy silence. Presently she let him see the cause of her preoccupation.

"I'm wondering," she said suddenly, "if the Medical Council knew all about me, would they strike me off the register?"

He started, looking surprised.

"Oh no, I don't think so," he said quickly. "I hadn't thought of it."

"I thought of it when I read that Grimes divorce case in the *B.M.J.* this week. The woman was Dr. Grimes' patient. They struck him off——"

"Yes, but—this is quite different. Besides, in that sort

of thing the man is always the aggressor, isn't he? Oh yes, this is quite different," he said, very quickly.

"Louis, you only talk in that quick way when you want to tell a nice, kind lie!" she said, sharply. "And I'd like to believe it was different. They only strike a man off the register when he does anything openly scandalous—just for the sake of the profession; and when the scandal involves one of his patients. This is openly scandalous enough, Lord knows! And—for a woman to have an illegitimate child is miles worse than for a man to be co-respondent in a divorce case."

Louis rose from the table and went across to get his cigarette box. She came and sat down by the fire, and they both smoked thoughtfully for a while.

"I hope you're not contemplating any more pieces of quixotry, are you?" he said at last.

Her voice seemed to come thinly from a very great distance, as she jerked herself up to sit straighter in the chair.

"It's like this, Louis. You know as well as I do all that women have up against them in any profession—even in any trade, except, perhaps, prostitution and domestic service. There they're at a premium——" Her foot tapped impatiently on the floor. "When I came, you know how jolly hard I had to fight to kill prejudice; and I did it! I jolly well proved to them that I was as good a man as any of them. Till November I was certainly making a success. In fact, I was becoming quite the vogue——"

She broke off, her voice tear-shaken again, but she coughed impatiently, and went on, speaking impersonally.

"I don't think in psychological medicine women will ever be as good as men: they're not impersonal enough. Their fatal gift of intuition makes them jump too much. And jumping, in diagnosis, is murder. But in research and in general practice their patience and their lack of narrow intellectualism and conservatism will make them better than, or at any rate as good as, any man. Only—while women are still fighting for their place I don't think they can afford to have traitors in the ranks."

"My dear girl, you know you're not a traitor," he cried hotly.

"I know it. So do you. So would a good many thinking people. There's an immense chunk of people about nowadays that think illegitimacy is a reason for blaming the law and not the individual. But the devil of it is, most people aren't thinking people. And to those you daren't offer a sort of Bolshevik example, dare you? You can't get away from the fact that, without a complete social and spiritual and every sort of revolution, you can't allow *everyone* to have illegitimate children; there'd be chaos. Therefore, until after that revolution, no one ought to. That seems horse-sense to me."

She smoked reflectively for a while; once again he got the queer impression that she was someone on a stage saying things taught to her and not things out of her own consciousness. But her quiet voice went on, with a dashing of sudden wild rain against the panes for undersong.

"You can't get away from the fact, either, that when women have got past the hectic stage of being 'women who did,' and physically violent to show their equality, and are gradually creeping by evolutionary methods in the public consciousness to a real equality, it's a pretty awful piece of treachery or weakness on the part of one of them to break the laws by which the rest are governed. I don't say the laws are right for a minute, but we're simply forced to submit to them for the sake of others. I'm hanged if women doctors are going to get a bad name because of me——"

"I think you're being a bit morbid, Helen. You only speak for the prosecution. Where's the defence?"

"There doesn't seem to be one. Here am I, a scientific woman, trained to think, knowing all people's lines of least resistance, and all the tricks of nervous control. When it came to the point I was as much bowled over as any slum girl! We're still savages in this sex question, and I, being more or less initiated, ought not to have been. You can't get away from that!"

"What I can't get away from is that you're morbid, Helen.

You talk about being initiated, and all that sort of thing! Aren't you initiated enough to know that you won't feel like this after June?" he said, bluntly.

"Oh, I've thought of that, of course! But this is deeper than any physiological disturbance could be. Louis, I think I ought to write to the B.M.A. and tell them all about it and let them judge. But I don't believe I'll ever have the courage to do it!"

Suddenly her tone of calm reasoning vanished, her control melted, and she flung herself over, to hide her face in the cushion.

"I'll be so hideously ashamed presently—acting the idiot like this. But I can't help it."

He went over and stood by the window, looking out at the wind-swept sky full of scudding clouds beneath a young rising moon.

"Louis," she said, after a while, wiping her eyes, "I *can't* let them take my work away! I feel as if the work is a dear friend I've killed. And Francis, too—it's as if I killed him! I don't want this child a bit. If I'd done this deliberately because, like a lot of nice, dear women, I had the passion to possess a child of his, I'd grin and bear it. But it's so damnable! I know it was just merely that I wanted—him!"

"Don't be so silly! You were thinking of him all the time. We both were thinking of him," he reminded her. "We thought marriage would cure him."

She sat up, straight and stiff and miserable.

"That was what I told myself. But it wasn't what I believed! I know the whole damned business was—just sex! It made me lie to myself! Oh, it's a plausible devil, with its suggestions of beautiful devotion! And now it's rotted me!"

There was a long silence, while her sobs grew more shallow, less frequent. Louis walked about the room, a cigarette between his lips, his hands in his pockets. Once he kicked rather viciously at a log on the fire; several times he went to the window and looked out. Then he came and sat down

in his chair by the desk, leaning his elbow upon it, his head held between his two hands.

"Do you ever lie awake at night, Helen, and simply quiver with misery, and think you can't go on another minute, and stuff the pillow in your mouth for fear you'll yell out and shock people?"

He spoke very quietly, as though asking her the most everyday thing on earth. She stared at him, and shivered a little because she knew so well——

"But how do *you* know? That's the sort of thing a woman does," she said.

"Haven't you tumbled yet to the fact that I'm a pretty synthetic sort of being, Helen? A lot of holes in me, patched——sometimes the stitches give! There's a lot of the woman in me: there's a lot of the weakling. Sometimes I lie awake there and feel I can't face to-morrow; I want to die to escape thought. I want to run away—it's because the idea of escape is so ingrained in me that I understand suicides and drunkards and drug-takers so well—they call them my pets here, don't they? When they drink or drug or lose their reason they're just trying to escape from themselves as I wish I could—as I used to——"

"But you? What is there for you to escape from? You seem so calm—such a very favoured sort of man to me."

He buried his face in his hands for a while and thought. Another moorland storm dashed against the windows with flirt and flurry of raindrops; the seven-sisters rose tapped on the pane in the wind.

"To-morrow you're going to Lashnagar, and you'll hear things. You'll hear how my wife died, I expect. But you won't hear why."

Once again he paused, and she began to feel frightened. It seemed as though the pain of talking were unendurable to him.

"She died of cancer, you see. We were married only four years. For three of them I was a hopeless drunkard."

"You?" she cried, and then: "Oh, don't be silly! How could you?" He saw that, in his trouble, she had swallowed up her own. He had hoped she would.

"I won't tell you details now. Some day I will. But I'd been at it eight or ten years; when I got to the hospital where you first knew me I was over thirty——"

"Yes"—she nodded. She had often wondered about this.

"She kidnapped me off into the Bush to cure me. We lived miles from anywhere. She was terrified of whisky; it has been in her family for generations—you'll hear about it up there. It's legendary now. Whenever I could I escaped and got drunk."

"Louis, I don't believe it! You're so wise, so controlled," she cried, staring at him as though he were mad.

"It's true anyway. It's all worn out of me. Well—one night, a few weeks before young Andrew was born, I had a week's drinking. While I was away she did my work—we were clearing land out in the Bush, you know. I met her just when I had the reaction on me; she was coming home in the half darkness looking absolutely beat to the earth. And because she made me feel so damnably ashamed of myself I was horrible to her. I sneered because her father had died of drink. She darted towards me—you'll see what pride of race is among her people when you get there. They're ancestor worshippers! I gave her a push and she fell."

Helen held out a quick, restraining hand as she saw his face, horribly white.

"No, I'm going to tell you the lot, old girl! Of course, seeing her fall sobered me, and I was too busy making love to her to see if she was hurt. I never gave it another thought. That night she went to bed before me, and muffled herself all up—I suppose there was a bruise. She usually used to lie with the wind blowing all over her. But like a blind fool I put another blanket on her, thinking she was cold. Long after she had died I saw it all. I was lying in bed one night—thinking about her, and a letter she was writing when she died. It was lying beside one from me, all blurred with tears where she had been reading it. Mine was full of examinations and the hospital. But we couldn't read a word of her letter. It was—scratches. But as I lay puzzling out the letter, and the cause of her illness, it all came

to me in a flash. I went mad that night. I saw without a shadow of a doubt, in what a psychic would call a flash of inspiration, that I had killed her—I hadn't only made her life hell from the moment I met her till the day she died, but I'd literally put her out of life."

He stopped, his face twitching, as he stood up and walked about for ten minutes without another word.

"Whatever can I say to you?" murmured Helen, knowing that he was not going to leave it at this.

"There's nothing to say, old girl. I'm telling you this to give you a clue to my present life. I raged about all that night; the next morning I deliberately set to work to get drunk. I was at the Neurological Clearing Station in London then. I applied for leave and got it: I was going to drink till I had courage to give myself up to the police as a murderer—just as you wanted a minute ago to get it off your chest to the Medical Council. It seemed the only thing to do—get punished!"

He stopped, looking at her miserably, but expectantly. She nodded.

"I went and stood on Hungerford Bridge, and the search-lights came out. There was an air-raid that night, and I tossed up. If the Germans got me, well and good; if they didn't I'd go back to the hospital next morning. Well, they didn't. After the 'All Clear' had gone I began to get a search-light into myself. I saw that the reason I wanted to give myself up to the police or the Germans, was that love of self-martyrdom deeply implanted in most of us. I was posing, old girl—it was real, mind, horribly real, but it was none the less a pose. My conscience was giving me such hell that the only way to shut it up was to be able to say, savagely, 'There now, you've ruined me!' And I could see that the harder thing was to fight my conscience. I wanted to die that night, and I've wanted to die many a night since. Yet all the time I think that's funking it. The decent thing is to accept your remorse, and all the torture it brings—it's awfully like the cancer that killed her. Bear it as quietly as you can and don't let it interfere with the life that you live in the daylight;

lie and writhe and kick in privacy as much as you like—see?”

She nodded; Louis could always change her bitterness to something gentler.

“For you to get yourself struck off the register by a piece of quixotry is just as much posing and yielding to that human passion for self-martyrdom as I was that night. We’ve both done damnable things, if you like; we’ve both learnt a tearing lot of wisdom from them. We’ve both sacrificed others in the process of our education—but in time one loses all these narrow, personal miseries. The work grips—one gets out to something wide—like a ship feeling her way out of a narrow estuary at quarter speed; then she’s out with her nose sniffing the open sea; the man on the bridge signals ‘Full speed ahead,’ and she’s off—she can’t help it; then engines and the great sea ways have got her.”

He looked into her face, and she gave a great sigh.

“I say,” he said, suddenly, “I haven’t been talking like—like an emotional girl in a confessional box, or—or a Dutch uncle, have I?”

She shook her head, standing up to go.

“You’re—just a brick, Louis,” she whispered. “You gave me a vision of something wide then.”

CHAPTER XXII

THE world of Lashnagar was a thing so new and strange to Helen that she was taken right out of herself. It was, as Miss Lashcairn had predicted, very cold. When, after a journey that she felt ought to land her in Greenland, she finally stood on the tiny station of Carlossie she felt desolate and chilled; the creeping renaissance of spring had not reached these northern latitudes yet: in the distance Ben Grief frowned at her, and seemed to be weeping with all his small runnels of tears; over towards the sea she saw the cliffs and then the dreary sand waste, and the bleak winds tore about her. The station-master spoke a language she could not understand, and she was feeling an utterly childish desire to turn and run back to England when she saw Dr. Angus. He looked exactly as he had looked when, years ago, he used to make all sorts of naïve excuses to himself for trips to Edinburgh so that he could keep a fatherly eye on Louis. It was the same Inverness cape he was wearing; possibly the tweed knickerbockers were the same; certainly the long heather stockings were the work of the same industrious hands; and the old "bonnet" was quite familiar. She felt cheered at once, and almost ran to meet him.

"Why, doctor, you're not a day older! And it must be more than five years!" she began as he shook hands with her and looked at her keenly before he helped the incomprehensible station-master to carry her baggage to the "machine."

On the journey home there was no time for brooding; he talked as though someone had turned on a tap, pointing out landmarks, telling her about "wee Andrew," about Louis, about Louis's wife, and about the Lashcairns. And then they drove up the road to the farm, and Helen's quick glance took

in all the decay of it. Dead-nettle, cowbane, kedlock and couch were the only greenery; the way to the byres was mossed over with age; rank grasses grew out of the disused pig troughs. A few hens scratched in the yard: there was a tremendous clucking and screeching going on inside a little weatherboard hen-house that looked incongruously modern; a small boy suddenly emerged, with three infuriated hens rushing before him, and three eggs in his hands.

"Doctor, they've laid! Three cheers, they've laid! I chased them about till they did," he cried, and came up to the machine. Helen looked at him curiously; she saw Louis's brown eyes, Louis's square jaw and someone else's thick golden hair and high Celtic cheekbones.

He came up, holding out his hand to Helen.

"Hello, Dr. Clevion," he said. "I got up at four o'clock this morning to wait for you."

"What a long wait!" she said, clambering out of the machine.

The doctor started to pull at her trunk; Andrew helped wildly, having deposited his eggs on the ground; an old witchlike woman, with a face the colour of ancient leather, and a plaid shawl over her shoulders, came out.

"That's Jean," said Andrew, ceasing his onslaught on the box, and turning to glance at his eggs. "She was old when my mother was born. My father says she's a witch—— You know my father, don't you?" he added, suddenly leaving the box to Dr. Angus, as he remembered that she had heaps of information for him.

"Yes, I know your father very well. I help him in his work," she said.

"What part do you do, and what part does he do?" he asked, planting himself firmly in front of her.

"Andrew, ye'll no go speirin' at her till she's put a bite in her mouth!" said Jean. Helen smiled at her reassuringly, and, taking up his eggs, Andrew came along beside her, towards the house, walking very slowly up the rough, rutted farm yard, through which the machine could not pass without accident.

"Now tell me—I want to know all about my father," said

Andrew, and she entered into a sketchy description of the hospital.

"Hesketh told me he could cure people when they were nearly dead," he said, and several other times Hesketh's name came into the conversation. After a while Helen asked the obvious question.

"Are you going to be a doctor when you grow up?"

"No. I think I shall be a sailor."

"That's a very fine thing to be."

"Last week I wanted to be a collier, and go in coal-mines, and try to find a fossil. Do you think you might find a mammoth's skeleton in a coal-mine?" he asked eagerly.

"I believe it's quite possible. Have you ever been to London?"

"Yes, I go to see Gran sometimes."

"Well, there's a mammoth in the Natural History Museum. Perhaps Gran would take you."

"Oh no, she'd scream! Father says she hasn't got a scientific mind. He showed me a frog's foot under a microscope once, with all the blood running through it. And Gran screamed. When I saw the microscope I wanted to be a doctor. When I read about fossils I wanted to be a miner, so that I could find one. But last week Hesketh gave me 'Big Steamers' to learn, and now I want to be a sailor, and take things all over the world. We found all the food places on the map, and put red lines to show where the ships go. They have to go awful squiggley sometimes, because of charts. It's a good idea to be captain of a ship—don't you think so?"

"Fine! I think if I'd been a boy I should have been a sailor."

"It would have been better in Drake's day, though—without all this bother of charts—you could go just where you liked! Duncan's grandfather and his father told him not to go out the other day, when there was a storm, but he did—he went to get herrings, and was washed away. Hesketh says it was foolish of Duncan."

They had reached the grey, worn stones in front of the house now, in spite of Andrew's purposely slow steps and the

“squiggley” way he had led her. He rushed into the house yelling, “She’s come” and “They’ve laid” in a sort of triumphant strophe and antistrophe; then he apparently rushed out by another door, for he appeared behind her presently carrying her small suit-case.

Miss Lashcairn was terrifying at first, with her fleshless eagle face, her bright blue eyes, her indefinitely greying hair and her dry, cynical manner. But after a few days Helen found her very soothing; Miss Lashcairn took her for granted and to be taken for granted was salvation to her just then. If they had fussed over her she could not have borne it. Hesketh—all the time she was there she never discovered whether this was his Christian name or not—looked very delicate. He had one artificial leg and crutches, so Andrew informed her when he took her up to see his playroom. Later he would have two artificial legs, and then, said Andrew, “you won’t see him for dust.” And he said it so solemnly, so casually, that Helen gathered he did not know he was talking anything but King’s English.

There was an amusing air of neatness and precision about Hesketh; even in the Highlands he would not adopt the usual nondescript heather tweed, preferring his neat blue serge, his high collars—which had to go by post to be laundered—and his sober ties; his hair was always scrupulously parted and smelled faintly of brilliantine. The war must have devastated one so meticulous.

She spent much time out on the hills with the boy, or wandering over the sand flats, learning the history of the village, and how the sand had buried it hundreds of years ago. Sometimes she went with Andrew to the fishermen’s huts; once she came upon Hesketh and the boy constructing a relief map of the world on the shore, and stood to watch it washed away by the incoming tide; another time she saw them building Rome on the seven hills, and Troy besieged by armies of stones and twigs. These too the sea washed out—and she went home that night feeling sad and futile. But very often Dr. Angus called for her and took her long journeys to his outlying patients. It was a life incredibly restful to body

and mind as well. All the time no one mentioned why she was here. Dr. Angus positively kidnapped her, to make her talk to him, asking her about Louis's hospital, about modern surgery, modern psychology, opening his mouth and crying for more like a baby bird being fed in the nest. And being incorrigible talkers, they got frequently and healthily heated about each other's inability to listen.

One day a child was born at an outlying village ten miles away. He took her for a drive in the machine when he paid his third-day visit. On the way they discussed cases.

"I hate maternity cases, don't you?" asked Helen.

"They're almost all I get," laughed Doctor Angus. "People here don't get ill. They are born, they go about their life's business, and drop in their tracks. We get a few accidents, but usually an accident is so violent here that it means death; we don't get epidemic diseases much. Louis's wife died of cancer, and her mother too—and her father—he died——"

He stopped then, and asked her suddenly why she objected to maternity cases.

"Probably, I think, because people always say of a woman doctor, 'Oh, let her stick to confinements and colds in the head, and not go interfering in other people's business.' It's natural cussedness, I suppose."

As time went on the spirit of the old farm seemed to grow up about her. Andrew had volunteered the information that the room in which she slept was "the Master's room"—his grandfather and grandmother and his mother had died in the old four-poster bed: their last look at a greying world had been through the window out of which she leaned every night to drink in the soft murmur of the sea, the sharp tang of the salt breeze. One day Aunt Janet mentioned the subject to her. Hesketh was reading and making careful notes for his lesson to young Andrew to-morrow—he gave him each lesson as carefully, as painstakingly, as though he were a classroomful of University students. The two women sat, one on each side of the hearth where the driftwood spurted and crackled, and the rats gnawed at the old woodwork. There was a strong

wind blowing in from the sea, sending the smoke in wreaths across the room to drift up to the rafters and hang there. Jean sat staring before her into the fire, her work-roughened hands hidden under her shawl. Suddenly Aunt Janet spoke,

"You're looking better. Feeling better?"

Her bright eyes bored into Helen's.

"Yes, much. I feel somehow braver since I've been here——"

"That's why I put ye intill the Master's room," said Aunt Janet. "There's been brave deaths in yon room; they were not the usual deaths of our people, deaths in the heat of battle, with good steel flashing, and red blood flowing, no time for courage to cool. They were deaths that ended a long, hard fight with disease and pain. I thought ye'd get courage, from the Master's bed."

She stared into the fire again, dreaming, and ghosts peopled the hill and the sand waste and the house for her. Helen shivered and told herself sternly that she was a scientific woman, who must not let her nerves play tricks. Presently Aunt Janet left her ghosts and looked across at Helen again.

"Ye were a fool not to get Louis to marry ye——"

Helen flushed painfully and looked across at Hesketh, who was deep in his geography.

"He wanted to. But it wasn't possible."

"Ye'd make a fine pair, for your work. And ye'd have saved yourself a lot of pain and stone-throwing."

Helen glanced helplessly at Hesketh again; he seemed trying to burrow into the book like a worm to escape Aunt Janet's tongue.

"Ye'll not go minding Hesketh. Wasn't he born of woman?" she asked grimly. "Ye were a fool not to marry the lad. Ye're always with him?"

"Yes. We're awfully good friends. But we're not the sort that need to marry to keep sensible about our work. And Louis's too good to be made use of."

Aunt Janet nodded a good many times and said nothing more, but from that day she seemed closer to Helen.

One day, at the end of May, Dr. Angus came with a box

given to him by the station-master at Carlrossie, to bring up to Helen. It was a complete baby's outfit, made most beautifully by hand—delicate, fine things of wool and cambric which had taken Miss Wembley hours to sew.

"My dear," she wrote, in a note at the top of the box, underneath which was a sachet of lavender, "I couldn't think of anything to do; you seem so far away from me now, and I miss you dreadfully. But most of all I miss being able to be with you just now. So, to comfort myself, I've revived my lost art of needlework. There's a gown here I made when I was eighteen—in my mother's day it was quite customary for a girl to include a baby's christening robe in her trousseau, though I don't think she knew why! I know you will let the little one wear these things for me in return for all the happiness and the peace his mother brought into my life."

When, on a day at the end of June, her little daughter was laid in her arms, wrapped in Miss Wembley's white shawl, by an old nurse who spoke such broad Scots that Helen could not understand a word she said, and Dr. Angus, looking ridiculously anxious for her approbation on his achievement, went home to bed, she felt that she would get sentimental about her baby, and tried to take herself in hand for it. Aunt Janet came in, and looked at the little one; Andrew slid under her arm and came to sit on the bed. He had already, during the morning, swarmed over the roof and was making a perilous way by decayed stonework to Helen's window, having been refused the door mysteriously, when Hesketh saw him and, limping along with his cork leg and his crutch, transported him into a boat where they had their day's food and lessons together. But now he was released and wanted to know all about it.

"It's a wee lassie, Andrew," said Aunt Janet.

He looked at its red face rather distastefully, but, seeing Helen's eyes upon him, decided that he must say something pleasant.

"It's very nice. Is it for us or for you?" he asked.

"For me."

Andrew looked relieved.

"What's it going to be when it grows up?"

Helen smiled and looked at Aunt Janet.

"Maybe a doctor, Andrew—or perhaps a flying woman! That would be rather fine, wouldn't it? Or perhaps she'll just want to be married."

"I'll marry her if you like," he announced.

"But think how lonely she'd be when you're away on your ship!"

"I'm not going to be a sailor now. I'm going to be a Professor, and cut up snails and frogs. I got Hesketh's book that came from the library. Hesketh's going to let me cut up a frog——"

Aunt Janet sent Andrew away then, and made Helen drink some milk—not with the gentle persuasiveness of a tactful nurse, but standing grim and stiff like a sentry and saying, calmly:

"Ye'll need to take this milk, now." And Helen was quite meek.

Aunt Janet sat down by the window.

"A good thing it's a girl, I think," she said after a while.

"Yes, I'm glad." Helen's face hardened suddenly. "They don't let girls be priests even if they want to."

Aunt Janet looked at her sharply, but still asked nothing.

"Her father's a priest, you know—at least, he was. Now he's in Louis's hospital and always will be. I tried to kill the priest in him. I didn't know it was even more ineradicable than the man."

That was all ever said on the subject. Helen closed her eyes. The softness of the June midday came in through the open window; the tide was in on the shingles, making a soft, rushing sound; the world seemed to be breathing gently in its sleep. After a while Aunt Janet stole out, closing the door.

A few days later, as she sat beside her, Miss Lashcain said reflectively:

"By the time she's grown up, being a love-child won't count against her. When I was a girl—— Ah well!" she broke off, abruptly.

"But she wasn't what they call a love-child," said Helen,

looking at the dark knob of a head so still in the creamy folds of the shawl. "She was the child of madness—on both our parts."

"And no father! Ye'll be owing her a lot, Helen."

She closed her eyes and let a thought sweep over her; Louis's idea of responsibility towards those to whom one's mistakes have brought tragedy had taken possession of her imagination, but strangely enough she had not thought of the child as one of the sufferers before.

When the child was a week old Dr. Angus asked why Helen did not leave her at Lashnagar for a year, to be brought up in one of the farms round about.

"Yon Shellpit's no place for a wee thing," he said, and Helen saw his point, especially when he added: "And ye're no ordinary woman. Ye've a man's job in the world." After a long, reflective pause he added, "And I'd be coming down to Shellpit once a month to report progress."

She thought about it all day, and in the night decided that for the child's sake and the work's sake she would be best at Lashnagar; she knew she would be jealously cared for; young Andrew belonged to everyone in the place, and was a hundred times fathered and mothered. Then, after a sleepless, tossing night, she talked it out with Aunt Janet and Dr. Angus.

"You see," she told them, sitting up in bed with her forehead creased with thought, and her eyes burning after her sleepless night, "I've found out that if you're trying to—do—to do anything in a wide sense—what Louis and I call building a new earth—you can't ask to be treated as an exception. I've done it once. Result, holy muddle! I'm not going to do it again. When girls have come to me lately with their third or fourth illegitimate child I can tell you it's been confoundedly difficult to talk to them. They just look at me and snigger. There is a difference between them and me, but they're not broad enough to see it. Perhaps it isn't big enough to be seen! A few people, like you two, and Louis, and the dear soul who sent baby's things—they seem to see it. On the other hand, a poor little girl I adored went back on to the streets because she said I was a 'dirty woman'——"

"Ye've to live your own life," put in Aunt Janet. "Ye can't always be thinking of others."

"If you're a *private* sort of person you *can* live your own life. If you're any sort of social person, like a doctor or a writer, or a priest, or a politician you can't afford to please yourself. It discredits your work. That's why I think it must be so confoundedly difficult to be a king—the white glare of it! Christ couldn't please Himself—making a new earth, could He? So, having made one mess of breaking social rules, I'm not going to make any more."

"But I cannot see it," began Aunt Janet.

Helen raised herself in the bed, her grey eyes bright in her anxiety to convince herself while she talked to them—a trick of hers.

"Listen, Miss Lashcairn! Women come to me and say they can't carry on because they've an illegitimate child. They say, 'No one will give me a job—everyone throws stones at me—I feel that ashamed.' In most cases, don't you think, Dr. Angus? they're lazy! Of course they're most of them frightfully neurotic, but that's beside the point. Many of them have had such a gruelling that they're content to sink and drift to charity or further immorality. Feeble things, they are—a lot of them. They're the ones who snigger when I go at them for the good of their souls. Well, now, I'm going to give them the edifying spectacle of an unmarried mother who doesn't want anyone's help—only the sort of help you two dears have given me—and who isn't ashamed of her baby!"

"It doesn't seem to me to be worth all the suffering you will get," said Aunt Janet.

"Oh, isn't it? You haven't the remotest idea how many of these unmarried mothers there are, now. Mind, I'm not going to flaunt baby! That would be useless, and very vulgar. And Louis has knocked out of me all my desire to martyr myself, for good and all. No, I'm simply going to make her a taken-for-granted, everyday part of my life, like eating and sleeping. I'm not sure of the result, but I think it will give me a great moral force with these women—and I believe I could find you one of them in every house in Lower Shellpit!"

"It's going to be a rough row to hoe," said Dr. Angus, his sentimental blue eyes wet. This was the first "unmarried mother" he had come in close contact with, and she took his breath away. "But—I'll be coming down to see you—every month," he added, in a whisper.

"It's going to be harder for the wee thing," said Aunt Janet.

Helen turned to her quickly.

"I believe in the Darwinian theory—she'll suit herself to her environment, and get a protective covering—don't you see? It won't hurt her."

They sat thinking for a while; Helen, after a burst of talk, was learning their trick of silence. But it was she who broke it.

"Besides, I'm not going to have people say I funk it—as they will if I leave her here," she said, and Miss Lashcairn guessed that she had not yet quite convinced herself.

"It's your pride you're thinking of now, and not the child and the work," she said.

"Well! if it is! I've lost most things, but I've still a lot of pride left," she said.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHEN she came downstairs again she was so far recovered as to find intense amusement in the fact that the baby embarrassed poor Hesketh almost to panic, while she herself puzzled him. He tried to speak to her, entirely ignoring the baby on her knee: he tried to discuss abstruse scientific problems, with a sedulous expression of interest, while the baby cried protesting for its food; in a pure spirit of the kindest tactfulness he tried not to recognize its existence, and Helen purposely drew it into the conversation. He had guessed at the unstated but unconcealed truth; he thought back over all the unmarried mothers of fiction—and as he had never read any modern novels at all, could not find anything like her. Margaret, in *The Cloister and the Hearth*, was the nearest approach to her. He would sit in the evening across the misty great room, watching her as she talked to Dr. Angus or Aunt Janet, or played with Andrew as though she were about ten years old. One day, when she and Andrew were doing interesting things with a sea anemone, he was able to correct her on a minute point, and her humility and gratitude for his correction won his heart completely. He respected her intellect tremendously; there was a precision, too, about her knowledge that exactly suited his meticulous nature. But her morals, thought Hesketh, were appalling! She ought to have been ashamed, especially in the society of men. As it was, she treated them with high-handed *camaraderie*. She ought to have been meek, and dependent—especially on men—even on poor shell-shocked soldiers without any legs, he told himself. Instead, she was horribly kind to him: she had entirely cured by a few quiet talks that ridiculous obsession of his that there was someone behind him with one of those unpleasant German sword-sticks—— He gave her up at last, watching with mingled

delight and apprehension her extreme meekness to Aunt Janet from behind his rampart of books; all the time she was there the box from Lewis's every fortnight came as a shield and buckler—but the thought of her worried him all the time.

When the time came to get ready for her journey homeward she had to admit to herself that even if she had arranged to leave the child at Lashnagar she would have upset the arrangement now. She took herself to task for her sentimentalism—and went on getting more sentimental every day; she had always sternly set her back against babies sleeping with their mothers; in the slums she had insisted on drawers being taken from chests or banana crates bought from the greengrocer's to make a cot for the babies. And, though Aunt Janet had brought out the ancient, carved, rockered Lashcairn cradle she deliberately put the child in the four-poster bed—feebly excusing herself by saying that she didn't believe in rockers, admitting in the privacy of her own heart that she wanted to hold the baby close in her arms. She had always preached against nursing a child—and sat for long hours with her in her arms even when she was asleep, with Aunt Janet's keen old eyes upon her, her quick tongue ready with some piece of cynicism that veiled kindness.

When she was packing Dr. Angus announced that it was not very nice for her to travel so far alone with a child—there would be the night to spend at Edinburgh, and luggage to attend to.

"Oh, I'll manage," she said calmly; "there are porters——"

"A woman with a child needs a man to look after her," he said, and hated himself for his tactlessness the next minute. But she looked at him and laughed, and he tried other arguments. At last he said, outright:

"I'm coming with you!"

"But your patients!" she cried, very much hoping that he would come, and take her over the two lonely days in the train, and the thing she had been dreading—the arrival at Shellpit station.

"I've left them before," he said, with determination.

"Oh, he's always off on jaunts," said Aunt Janet. "Jaunts

and lectures, saying he's got to keep his knowledge modernized! He was always trotting off to Edinburgh when Louis was there—just for an excuse. They only get born and die here—and they can do that without his help.”

“As a matter of honest fact, I'm not thinking of Dr. Clevion in the matter. I'm thinking that I'm past seventy, and my jaunting days are nearly past. But I want to see the lad's hospital.”

So Helen took home with her beside a tiny pink baby already in short clothes, though she was not a month old, an old man in tweed knickerbockers, an Inverness cape and an extraordinarily tall grey hat. Louis was at the station with his car when Helen came out of the train carrying the baby, and Dr. Angus went to look after the luggage. She noticed the station-master staring at her with goggle eyes; several people whom she knew were on the platform; they glanced away quickly, whispering to each other with insignificant glances. But the presence of Dr. Angus helped her; they evidently thought he was her father.

“It's great to have you back,” said Louis. “I've been an exile since you went away,” he added, holding her hand and piloting her to the car. Then he looked at the child, who was asleep. “I say, she's rather splendid, you know!”

“Well, here we all are! But I certainly funk going down Sharlock Street!” He saw that her face was colourless, her lips bluish-white.

“You're not going there to-day, anyway. I'm taking you home to the Staff House. I know that's all Angus has come for—to pick holes in the hospital. Isn't it, Angus?”

Dr. Angus flushed with pleasure, and climbed very gingerly beside Louis, desperately afraid of starting some terrible lever and sending them all to perdition. He and Louis talked the whole time; as they drove through the streets, hot and indescribably airless and smoke-begrimed, Helen sat up stiff and straight; practically everyone turned to look at the car—everyone knew her and her story. Before nightfall the town buzzed with the news that she had come home with her father and a baby. The Rector, carefully hushing up Muriel's announce-

ment of the news before the Deacon's son, thought about it all evening, and, in the sacred privacy of his bedroom, discussed it painfully with his wife. But they were powerless to do anything.

Miss Wembley, who had known she was coming home, went down to Sharlock Street, to find Dr. Hardwicke still there. She had a great sheaf of flowers with her—roses, pinks, carnations and syringa.

"Farne has just 'phoned to say he has kidnapped her for the night," said he.

"I'm very glad. I'll just come in and put the flowers about the rooms to welcome her to-morrow," said Miss Wembley.

She filled everything she could find in the waiting-room with flowers, put them in the kitchen, and made Helen's bedroom a bower of roses and pinks whose fragrance killed the reek of the fried-fish shop. By the bed was an oak cot she had sent while Helen was away; it looked white and very soft underneath its eiderdown. Miss Wembley looked guiltily round and then, stooping, kissed the place on the down pillow where the small head would lie.

"I am afraid I am getting rather foolish," she said, her soft brown eyes deep with tears, her face rose-pink. "I do hope the bed is well aired."

She took the hand-mirror from the dressing-table—her immemorial practice for making sure about damp beds—and put it between the sheets. She must wait ten minutes to be quite sure—and she looked about her. Helen was not the sort of person to decorate her room very much. Over the mantelpiece was a picture of Lord Lister cut from some periodical and pinned up with a drawing-pin. There was a photograph of a hospital ward decorated with holly and flowers for Christmas, with a group of nurses and students, and smiling patients in bed. She could distinguish Louis and Helen—Louis grave, Helen gay. At the side of the picture was a reproduction of the gentle St. Francis and the birds, the old fresco from the church at Assisi; on the mantelpiece was a small silver Calvary.

"I wonder if dear Helen is getting religious," said Miss Wembley, doubtfully. She did not know that the picture and

the crucifix had been brought here by Helen when she had packed all Francis's belongings at his rooms and sent them to the hospital.

As she took the mirror out of the bed, quite dry, she saw a little cheap Japanese colour print—a bird in flight, a bough of plum blossom and a blue sky. She felt that she did not know very much about Helen. It wasn't the sort of thing she had expected to find beside her bed.

She was going downstairs again when she heard a slight noise from the next room, and Mrs. Schlegel called to her.

"Is that you, Miss Wembley?"

She turned back and went into the room: the blind was drawn. Mrs. Schlegel lay on the bed.

"Isn't she coming to-night?"

"No, Dr. Farne has taken her home."

"Oh, what a blessing! I shall be all right to-morrow."

"What is the matter? Hadn't I better ask Dr. Hardwicke to give you something?"

"Oh, please don't, Miss Wembley. It's only my head. I shall be all right to-morrow."

The little boy Charlie was in his cot already asleep; Miss Wembley went into the kitchen, made some tea and took it up, guessing that Mrs. Schlegel, like herself, hated to be fussed over when she was ill.

Up at the Staff House Dr. Angus, in his eagerness to see everything, was forgetting that he had already travelled nine hours, and at last, when nothing else would satisfy him, Louis sent him with Nurse Walters to look at the electric massage rooms and plant, the conservatories and workshops; in particular he was fascinated by the laboratory: it brought back his youth, he told Nurse Walters a little wistfully; she carried him off to the gymnasium, where shocked muscles were taught to grip again.

And, in the study where so many of the quiet crises of her life had been fought out, Helen was looking at Louis. The child was lying placidly on the couch, wide awake, as Helen told him all the news, repeated almost every word Andrew had said, down to his final message on Carlossie station, that he

had finally and irrevocably given up the thought of any career other than that of driver of the North British Express. And then, with a glance at the baby, she said eagerly:

"There doesn't seem anything wrong with her, does there?"

"No. I was sure there wouldn't be. She's fine! There's not much wrong with Andrew, is there?"

She smiled at him reassuringly.

"Yet, look at his heritage! I tell you—I'm getting to believe more and more that normal plus subnormal equals normal—we're levelling upwards——"

He broke off, looking at her, and she said what she had been wanting to say all the time.

"How is he?"

"Would you like to see him?"

She nodded, but still looked inquiringly.

"He has been very happy lately; he writes a good deal. Queerly enough he's very secretive about what he writes. You will notice considerable wasting, I'm afraid."

Her face twitched and she waited a minute. Then——

"And—his left side, Louis?"

"The dragging is more marked. It is slower than I had expected."

She shivered.

"I think of Heine sometimes—and that man in Kipling's story, 'Love o' Women.' It's so cruel to him—he doesn't deserve——"

"You will find that he is very happy."

She took up the child from the couch. Louis looked at her in surprise.

"I'm going to show baby to him."

"He won't understand."

"I know. But I want him to see her."

They went into the next room. It had been a very hot day, but the cool air was blowing in over the heather, through the open window, on to a writing-table with two candles set in church candlesticks.

"He likes to cultivate the altar illusion, I think—those

candlesticks were among the things you sent up from his rooms. Look at his flowers."

White flowers, that he had gathered from the garden, were arranged in those stiff brass arrangements that hold flowers on the altar; red roses cut the bank of white with a cross. He was sitting with his head bent over papers on the table, while the candles flickered and dripped in the breeze.

"Wouldn't you like the light, Francis?" said Louis, behind him with his hand on the switch.

He did not hear. Helen went closer.

"Francis!" she said, and then he turned and looked at her, frowning a little. By degrees light came to his face, and he stood up, to drop again into his chair.

"Mary!" he cried, holding out his hands to her, his face upturned and shining. The left arm dropped and lay across his knee.

"It's Helen," she said, briskly.

Louis stepped back into the shadows.

"Mary!" he said again, his eyes very bright, dilated; his beard had grown rapidly, down on to his chest, but he looked younger.

"I've been away such a long time, Francis. Did you miss me?"

He smiled at her, and shook his head. His lips murmured and she caught the words—in slow, drawn-out breaths:

"Alone upon the mountain top I see His shining face——"

She sighed, and drawing her chair a little closer, sat down beside him.

"This is my little girl," she said. "Don't you think she's very sweet?"

He looked at the child, and held up his hand, with two fingers together as though he were saying the Benediction. Then it dropped to his side and he frowned at her, while she lay with peaceful wide eyes watching the swaying of the curtain, the flickering of the candles—faint movements that her imperfect vision could grasp for an instant.

He looked puzzled, as though wrestling with memory.

"I'd like you—Francis—to tell me what name to call her,"

said Helen, and Louis blew his nose fiercely in the shadowy corner.

"Name?" he said vaguely—"name?"

The frown deepened; he passed his hand over his forehead again.

"If only I could remember!" he whispered. Then light came into his face. His hands stretched out, as though to take her, but he did not notice that Helen still held her in her own arms.

"Dost thou—" he whispered, "renounce—vain pomp and glory of the world—covetous desires—carnal desires—of the flesh——"

He looked at her anxiously; she turned helplessly to Louis.

"It's not any use, old girl," he said, under his breath.

She stood up, trembling a little. Francis pointed to the desk, strewn with small sheets of paper, covered with straggling large writing.

"You will come again?" he said.

"Yes, to-morrow."

"You were always very kind to me, Mary—there is a strange heaviness, a strange dulness——"

"I'll come again, Francis," she said, and could think of nothing else to say.

"You shall be first—in the kingdom. You shall give my message to men."

"Yes," she said. "Good-night." She could not trust herself to say more.

"Good-night," he answered, and, before they were out of the room, was sitting at his table again in the flickering light.

For a moment she paused at the door. A moth was fluttering to and fro round the flame. He took it tenderly in his hand, so carefully for fear he might brush and hurt its wings, and put it out in the garden. They closed the door and left him.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE house in Sharlock Street smelt sweetly of flowers when Helen went in next morning. She had written asking the girl from the Rachel Macmillan School, who had been at the crèche, to stay in the district and look after her baby for her during the day, and the girl, who had found rooms in Upper Shellpit, was sitting in the waiting-room when she arrived.

"Do you really think this will be enough for you, Nellie?" she asked, "—one baby, or two babies—there's Mrs. Schlegel's little one as well—instead of a roomful of them?"

The girl's radiant smile was sufficient answer as Helen introduced her to the baby, and Dr. Hardwicke came in out of the consulting-room.

"Jolly glad to see you back, doctor," he said, with an exaggerated sigh of relief. "Good Lord, the babies they produce! And they say the birth-rate is declining! Ninety-three confinements you let me in for, you sinner!" He laughed his irrepressible laugh, and went into the consulting-room to find his case-book and tell her all the news, informing her between-whiles that Miss Wembley had been a mother to him, and that he was going to Wales to-morrow for a whiff of clean air before he began to write his book.

He went out to do his last day's visiting and she looked through the small window; the sunflowers and artichokes were tall and strong, the nasturtiums gorgeous, putting up green parasols over their brown and golden blooms. They seemed to thrive in the smoky air. By an arrangement of vast quantities of string Mrs. Schlegel had trained runner beans to make a shady arbour beneath which the boy lay when he was asleep, beside the little table at which Helen was to have her meals. Then she went through the passage to the kitchen to find Mrs. Schlegel—it was all coming back to her, the smell of the dis-

pensary, where she had deliberately splashed lysol into the basin to get the dear, familiar whiff of it—the faint stuffiness in the air left by people who were not clean, the stale smell of frying oil in the fish-shop opposite—somehow she could not get away from them, and didn't want to. And the child! Well, she would show them all that a sane woman could bring up a healthy illegitimate child even in the slums!

Mrs. Schlegel came into the room, taking off her rough scrubbing apron to greet the doctor; she looked ill, but there was no time yet to talk about that; instead, she went into raptures about the new baby, while Helen had to see little Charlie show off all his paces for her approbation. At last the two were packed into the big new perambulator, the girl lying still and weak and limp, with curious eyes wide open; the boy sitting up stiff and straight in all the pride of one and a half years and a new sun hat, his legs carefully stowed away for fear they might touch the baby.

"It's a long way to the Park, Nellie—nearly a mile," said Helen, "and the pram's very heavy——"

"Oh, that's nothing!" said Nellie, and went off gallantly through the gantlet of curious eyes, as women stood at their doors or peeped through their windows at the doctor's baby.

Helen turned to Mrs. Schlegel, and said:

"You look very ill! What have you been doing to yourself?"

But Mrs. Schlegel, tearful and tremulous and white, would say nothing, and, as the waiting-room got impatiently filled up, the day's work began—a bigger day's work than usual, for the news that the doctor was back had spread, and they were glad to pour illness, unhappiness, wickedness into her ears. Young Dr. Hardwicke was very clever—oh yes! and a real gentleman! But he had a doubting eye and a cynical tongue.

In the weeks that followed Helen was to prove the right-headedness of her decision to carry everything off with a high hand. To be sure, there was a great deal to put up with in Upper Shellpit. Practically everyone but Miss Wembley and Mr. Parmoor failed to recognize her, unless it were by a very distant bow in passing. Mr. Parmoor, as soon as he saw her car coming, would stand still on the pavement, take

off his hat and wait till she had passed—"just exactly as if I'm a funeral!" she thought. One day, when Nellie and the babies were in the car with her, he held her up while he purchased a rattle and two bars of milk chocolate for them, presenting them with sentimental solemnity that upset Helen's gravity for the rest of the day. But she got into the way of waiting to be recognized before she spoke to anyone, for she could not help being hurt at an averted face answering her friendly smile. By degrees people got used to seeing her car with the pretty young nurse and the two babies going up to the hospital, whenever she had work up there, or into the outlying country districts where a few of her patients remained faithful.

When she had been back about two months Mr. Tappan wrote to her. She opened his letter with a little feeling of dread. It informed her that Francis Reay had been deprived of his Holy Orders at an Ecclesiastical Court—and how deeply grieved Mr. Tappan was that a curate of his should have been so disgraced. Helen felt sorry for Mr. Tappan—but Francis, with his dreams, and his message and his purple cassock, knew nothing of it.

The Rector went on to say that he was surprised at a woman of her good sense and education bringing her child into the district where she had some social standing, and actually flaunting it in public. "It is not the little one's fault that it is born under a cloud, I know," he went on, "but surely children of that sort are better in an Institution. I know a Home myself, carried on under the most modern system, where my recommendation would secure your child a place. You are not restricted in any way, except that, when you visit the child as it grows older, you have to call yourself its aunt. It will have every advantage of pure air, good food and a healthy spiritual atmosphere. Let me urge upon you, my dear Dr. Clevion, your earnest consideration of this matter. You must realize how very difficult it is for us spiritual leaders to admonish sin when, in our midst, we have such a—if I may say so—green bay tree." After this the good old man went on to ask Helen to relieve his anxiety as to whether the child had been baptized—if she would let him know he would be most

delighted to perform the ceremony in private at any time, and he had a small phial of water he had many years ago brought back from the Jordan for the baptism of his first grandchild, which he would be quite ready—more than ready—to use for the little one's benefit.

Helen wrote, refusing his kindly offices of every description, and went on serenely with her unchristened child, whom she called Francesca; she certainly justified the Rector's mention of the green bay tree, for she flourished exceedingly in the atmosphere of amazed intolerance about her.

But the practice dropped and dropped until the car, except for visiting the hospital, was useless. There were plenty of patients: the nearest hospital for general treatment was on a hillside five miles away, reached only by a crawling tramway system; but all her patients were Lower Shellpit people, most of whom thought doctors ought not to be paid for their work, and even resented being asked to bring back their medicine bottles for a repeat dose, when they could sell medicine bottles for three-halfpence each to the rag-and-bone man. Sometimes she worked from half-past eight in the morning till nine at night, visiting, receiving patients, getting them away to hospital, understudying the Sanitary Inspector, and having constant acrimonious fights with him, either on the 'phone or in person.

She scarcely cleared expenses: had it not been that Louis insisted on paying rather excessively for her surgical operations at the hospital, she would not have been able to carry on. Then, following the example of Dr. Jelley in the East End of London, she started to charge sixpence a visit and sixpence a bottle for medicine—a very elastic charge, forgotten entirely when patients genuinely could not pay.

Of course she got into trouble with various authorities: the school authorities summoned her to attend a meeting because she had said a certain little boy must not go near school, but spend his time up on the moors, where she took him in her car whenever she could, because he was tuberculous. They summoned the mother, who referred them to Helen; they doubted her diagnosis, which clashed with the school doctor's rather

hurried examination: in Louis's laboratory she had slides that would have proved her right had she mentioned them. But she paid the fine, advising the mother still to keep the boy away from school, and sending a full report of the case to the M.O.H., who said that, though he quite agreed with her, he could do nothing. Two years later the child was in a sanitarium for tubercle.

She had trouble with Dr. Williams and Dr. Haverford, who said that she was interfering with their panel, until she was able to prove that almost all her patients were among those unemployed, or else tired almost literally to death of the panel doctor's worried, hurried visits and three-minute diagnoses; or else those too frightened by disreputable clothing and disreputably neglected disease from seeking the brisk and shining smartness of the St. Mary's Road houses.

So she went her way, with an ever-growing following of the sick and poor and wicked; she came in touch, sometimes with the evangelical young curate, who looked at her with large, earnest eyes, frankly pained; once or twice they met at death-beds, and she felt that they liked each other; she was perfectly sure that he prayed for her.

Priests seemed to gravitate towards her—the attraction of opposites. The old Catholic Father, whose living was worth about a pound a week and a few meals sent in by a few parishioners who loved him, came often to spend an evening with her when the work was done, and to share her supper out under the runner beans, or in the kitchen where Mrs. Schlegel sat looking like the Lady of Shalott. He reminded her of the people at Lashnagar: he had the same incurious interest, the same intelligent mercifulness; he grew to be a great friend, and their flocks of the gaunt-faced, draggle-dressed and vicious overlapped. They discussed troubles with heartfelt earnestness. She grew passionate about closed windows, and the hot boracic fomentations people would *not* use unless her eyes were on them. She told him her grievance of the medicine bottles again and again, and he would advise his people gently to do as the doctor wished. He would become mildly unhappy about church candles and heating—all of which came out of his

pound a week. Sometimes he was pathetic because the kind soul who sent him soup for his dinner on Tuesdays and Wednesdays *would* flavour it with onions.

"How can I tell her that onions make me violently ill, doctor?" he would say, "and it is most sustaining soup—most!"

When the car became unnecessary for visiting patients she removed it from the garage, where the rent was fairly high, and stored it in a stable underneath the two rooms in which Father Joseph lived. She used it, then, just for running up to the hospital, and Louis's chauffeur kept it cleaned and in repair for her. But one day Father Joseph discovered a pensioned crippled soldier who had driven a tank in the war; it was found that he could drive the most delicate invalids with perfect safety provided they never mentioned the war to him: so the priest and the doctor organized a series of joy rides for old and sick people and children, up round the moors and back again for three wind-washed hours. Father Joseph wanted to pay for the petrol; they argued violently about it one evening until Mrs. Schlegel came along the passage to see whatever was the matter; finally they agreed to pay half each, and Helen's convalescents got better more quickly; left to themselves they would never have left their foul walls and streets. And Helen would worry because she thought Father Joseph was getting a lean and hungry look; and he was wishing the old days were back, when he could have gone into the forests somewhere to gather roots and simples for her to make into medicine instead of those drugs which brought such heavy bills with them.

And so time passed until Francesca began to walk on uneven steps about the passage and waiting-room, and Helen, all day at her work, would get flashing thoughts of the evening, when she would be bathing her and putting her to bed—when Francesca would be a great girl going to school, leaving her mother all alone. But that was a long time yet! Meanwhile the days were very happy, though full of toils and fights and anxieties.

One night she had put Francesca to bed early; Nellie had gone to her rooms in Upper Shellpit at six o'clock and Mrs.

Schlegel had just seen the last patient out. Helen was putting on her close-fitting little motoring cap; she was feeling tired of everything, and a little depressed; she had rung up Louis to ask if he could put up with her for several hours' furious talking, and he had told her he would welcome her with open arms. She was just at the door, telling Mrs. Schlegel not to wait up for her, when there was a ring at the bell, and a harassed young husband explained that his wife was taken ill. She said she would come at once. She called up the hospital on the telephone.

"Bad luck, Louis. I'd just got my hat on, and now I'm sent for to a case. It'll be a night's job, I'm afraid. Young, rather spoilt woman—young, very fond, very foolish husband; first child. Oh, maternity is a curse! I'm fed up to-night and tired. I wanted to let off steam to you and then go to bed and sleep my head off. I do hope I shall not be bad-tempered. Good-night, old thing!"

She took her bag and hurried out of the room, only to find, when she reached the house, that the little woman was much more frightened than ill, and that her help would certainly not be needed till midnight. So, with a few far from bad-tempered words of advice and comfort, she went back home through the streets, hot and refuse-strewn where the public-houses and fish-shops were centres of noise and joviality in a desert of dreariness. Passing the Willis home she heard voices raised fiercely, and wondered if Mrs. Willis had temporarily mislaid her religion; only a few days ago Mrs. Willis had cut her in the street; she had got religion fiercely from the young curate—so fiercely that she did nothing further for her daughters save pray for them, while the paralyzed old man sat and chattered at her. And—she had cut the doctor, because the doctor was an illegitimate mother.

Out in Sharlock Street the Pauline children played decorously, like children in a fairy-tale: they ran to her as she passed, one with a nasturtium, another a damp warm piece of toffee to press into her hand. She spoke to them, smiling, not noticing very much what she said, and hurried home to spend an evening making long deferred accounts.

Mrs. Schlegel brought in supper on a tray and said she would like to go out for a while; Helen, explaining about the impending case, said she would try to sleep a little before midnight. Then the house was quiet; upstairs in Helen's room Francesca was lying adorably flushed in sleep; in Mrs. Schlegel's room Charlie tossed the clothes off again and again—Helen, knowing his heart, went in three times to cover him up.

The account books lay open on her desk and she began to dream. Presently her fingers, holding her fountain pen, began to scribble on her blotting-paper, writing her name—Helen Clevion, M.B., F.R.C.S., and then she added F.R.S., and looked at it calculatingly.

"Not in ten thousand years," she said, and tearing up the scrap of paper threw it into her waste basket, laughing at herself. Presently the wilful pen wrote again—and this time it was "Francesca Clevion, F.R.S.," and once again, looking at it calculatingly, she laughed. But this time she added, "Well, why not?"

After that she tried to read up a disease that had cropped up during the day, but, failing to concentrate, went upstairs again to look at the children. Charlie was quite still this time; she looked at him with eyes more critical than when his mother's were watching her face; it wasn't a very nice baby face—the forehead was narrow and protruding, the chin almost imperceptible. Realizing that she was an utter Pharisee, she went across to her room to gloat over the almost blatantly eugenic beauty of Francesca, her crinkled gold hair, her fat little hands, her rose-leaf cheeks.

"I ought to be ashamed of myself," she said, as she went downstairs again. "Here I am comparing my baby to my servant's and thanking the Lord mutely that she's so much nicer. There's only a step from that sort of thing to two women scratching each other's eyes out about their children."

Hurried steps came along the street just as she was turning into the consulting-room: someone battered feverishly at the door. She guessed it was the frightened young husband again. But it was Amy Willis—she almost fell into the house, and

stood panting against the passage wall. Her mousy hair was dragged away from the pins; her narrow forehead was wet with perspiration, her pale, heavy face flushed and vivified. Helen shut the door quietly, and drew the trembling girl inside the room.

"What's the matter, Amy?" she asked, with a silent sigh of resignation.

For a long time the girl could not speak, but at last she blurted out that her mother had been beating her again, and had turned her out.

"But, you silly child, why let her beat you? You're stronger than she is. You could have got out without being hurt."

There was, she saw then, a cut on the girl's cheek and lip from which blood was trickling; as she washed it with something that stung a little the tingle made the girl coherent. After a while she gasped out:

"It's because—because I've bin an' gone an' got into trouble again!"

"Oh, Amy, what a pity! I thought you and Dick were going to be married."

"So—so—we were, m'm," sobbed the girl. "B-but you know w-what I am! Not a bit smart—or—or takin' like others. If it wasn't as I let 'im—d-do—as he liked wi' me, he'd never 'a' stuck to me."

"I do wish I could make you think better of yourself, my dear! You're miles above Dick," said Helen decidedly.

"Ooo-er!" This was blasphemy to Amy. "I alwiz wuz plain—and never nothing worth wearin'. An' when you've 'ad one kid you're done. A fellow never thinks about anything but the one thing with you afterwards."

"But couldn't you have put his mind on to something—something nicer, Amy?" she asked, quite feebly, realizing that there was nothing in this girl save a sort of beaten-doglike devotion towards the only boy who had ever noticed her, and a fierce, gross realization of her sex as her only asset.

"I'm not clever like some," she cried, "and since me müther's tuk up wi' th' church it's bin sickenin'er than ever. Before, her used to throw us all wi' chaps. Now if we so much as

look at a pair o' trousers 'ung on a clothes line, 'er raises 'ell! The night as Dick put this acrost me her'd shut me out for being half an hour late, an' I had for sleep in them condemned cottages on th' shawdruck. Dick stayed to keep me comp'ny a bit."

"Have you had supper, Amy?" Helen broke in sharply. She shook her head.

"I come home from work, and 'er rounded on me all evening. I don't know how her found it out," said the girl, wearily. "I wisht I was dead."

Helen went into the kitchen, found some cold meat and some jam tarts, which she laid on the table with a bottle of lime-juice. She went back into the consulting-room to fetch Amy. The girl's eyes had strayed out of the room into the little lean-to dispensary, with its neat rows of bottles, phials and boxes, and its lettered drawers.

"Enough poisons for doin' anyone in, there!" she said, still sniffing back her sobs.

Helen laughed; she found it hard to combat the lay idea that a surgeon was a butcher and a physician a poisoner. She settled Amy and left her to her meal for half an hour. Then she heard her coming along the passage again.

"Come in, Amy, and sit down," she said, gently.

The girl, very red-eyed, sat on the extreme edge of a chair. Helen looked at her a moment, pitying Dick, trying to fit her into the scheme of things, trying to imagine her married, sluttish, foul-tongued, animal, approachable only through the greed of her sex impulse; or—unmarried! Then she would grow more uncontrolled, more avid year by year in the fulfilment of her uncontrolled desires. Married she would ruin one man and some children; unmarried it was difficult to see how many she would hurt.

"Amy," she said, "don't you think if I asked Dick to marry you, and you went away from here to live, you could make him happy?"

"He won't marry me for toffee," she said, beginning to snivel again. "A fellow that's got you into trouble never does—you ought for know that."

Helen's face flamed and she fought with herself for restraint.

"If I asked him—explained——" she suggested.

"Well, you c'n try if you like," she said, sullenly.

Helen hesitated. It was not easy for her to say to Amy what she so often had to say to patients—but she plunged bravely.

"Amy," she said, "don't you think if Dick saw you—well, cleaner and daintier, he would think more of you? You say he loves you only in one way. But you know, if you are going to be married, that's the very least part of love——"

"It's all, to a man," said Amy, listening opaquely.

"Well, if you think so—— But even then, isn't he more likely to stick to you if you are charming and attractive? And no woman can be charming if she isn't quite clean."

Then she sighed, for Amy was not listening; her next words showed that she was thinking of the immediate problem.

"Where are you going to-night?" asked Helen.

"I canna go 'ome. Me müther said as her'd put me i' th' 'Ouse——"

"Well, Amy, the best thing you can do is to stay here for the night. I suppose you'll go to work to-morrow?"

"Yes'm," said Amy, suddenly respectful at the prospect of getting something for nothing.

"Very well, come back here to-morrow and have dinner with Mrs. Schlegel—you know her, so you won't be shy. In the afternoon I'll go and see your mother, and I'll write and ask Dick to come and have a talk with me. Write down his address, will you?"

The girl wrote it on a slip of paper, then Helen took her to the outhouse where was the improvised bath. She lighted the geyser and showed her how to turn it off; she threw a great handful of lavender bath salts into the water, reflecting that carbolic acid would be more to the point.

Afterwards, when she showed her to the little bedroom, she said gently:

"Amy, this has made you very unhappy, and you'll have a lot more to go through, I'm afraid. But promise me you'll

not get down in the dumps about it! I'll help you all I possibly can."

The girl muttered something and went into the room sullenly. Helen turned away, feeling quite hopeless about her. Then she went to write to Dick, and to explain to Mrs. Schlegel, whose key she heard in the door, that Amy was to have a good breakfast before she went to work.

When she went upstairs to kiss Francesca's warm, sleepy little hand before she went out to her patient, she heard Amy's sobs again, and, opening the door softly, stood at the foot of the bed and said:

"What's the matter, my dear? I can't help feeling that, if you'll only take advice now, this will be a turning-point for you."

But she sobbed on, sullenly, enjoyably.

Helen glanced at her wrist-watch impatiently; she knew that she ought to be away, but could not leave her like this. Mrs. Schlegel was certainly not above hysteria herself when she got upset, and the two of them, with two babies! She wondered if she ought to call round and ask Father Joseph to sleep on the couch in the consulting-room. Then Amy's sobs quietened, and she gasped out:

"Doctor, if it wasn't as you've bin kind, I'd never 'a' told you."

"What is it, Amy?" asked Helen, not very interestedly, for she had got used to terrible confessions.

"D'you remember that time I was ill, and you come to me—on Easter Sunday?"

Helen nodded.

"When that kid died—I laid on it——"

"I know. They said that at the inquest."

"I laid on it—a purpose! Choked it! So's Dick wouldna 'ave fork out four bob a week," she said dully.

There was a long silence as Helen tried to grapple with this problem: she felt that she could only congratulate the little one on having been murdered—but there was Amy's point of view to consider.

"Amy," she said, so gently that the girl was astonished, "I "

can't stay now. There's a patient who needs me at once: she is in great pain, and every minute I stay with you she is longing for me to go and help her. To-morrow we'll talk this over——"

"It's like a judgment, getting landed again, like this," mumbled Amy.

"I don't think so at all, my dear. Don't you think perhaps it's to give you another chance? You killed one little baby—don't you think this other little one is coming to teach you to love it?"

"I shall never love it. Do yo' love yourn?" she asked, peering out with her colourless eyes between wisps of hair.

"I certainly do; you can't guess how much till you know for yourself. And I didn't think I would, before she came. You'll find it's just the same. Now try to go to sleep. I'll see that you don't go in the House this time."

Then she had to run, for it was past midnight.

CHAPTER XXV

THE night wore on: the poor young husband walked agitatedly up and down; the home comprised two rooms only. Every time the frightened girl in the bed gave a cry, he groaned, and in the next room through the thin walls a man complained that he could "get no bloomin' sleep. If he'd 'a' known he wouldn't 'ave let his rooms to a young couple, not if they was to crawl to 'im!" Presently, as the culmination of pain approached, and Helen knew that chloroform would not hush the involuntary cries, she sent the boy along to Sharlock Street, saying that she believed she had left her bedroom light burning, and would he go along to look, just to reassure her? As soon as he had gone she gave a sigh of relief: his groans and his pacing were getting on her nerves. In ten minutes he was back, looking startled.

"The light's full on, doctor," he said, opening the door, though she motioned him hastily back.

He retreated, talking all the time, trying to make himself heard through his wife's moans.

"There's someone skriking her head off i' your 'ouse, doctor," he said, with chattering teeth. "Oh, my God, does it 'urt 'er as much as all that?"

"No, don't you worry. She can't feel it at all. I've given her chloroform," said Helen, soothingly.

"Oh, thank God, doctor," he cried, wiping his face on his shirt-sleeve. "There's someone carryin' on shockin' i' your 'ouse, doctor," he repeated. "The bobby was just goin' in."

"Oh, dear, dear! That wretched girl having hysterics, I suppose," she said, hurriedly. "Can't be helped. Shut that door at once and run away."

Again the protests through the thin wall—again the boy's groans and footsteps, and five minutes later the child was born.

It was ten minutes after that that Mrs. Schlegel came running along the street, shrieking as she came. Helen, at the window, told her sternly to be quiet.

"It's Francesca," she cried.

"Ill?" asked Helen, her heart standing still.

"Oh, my God, my God!"

"Mrs. Schlegel, be quiet, now. Is it anything very bad?"

"O-h!" she moaned. A few curious windows opened; a few heads were thrust out, remembered the impending confinement, and went in again.

"Listen, Mrs. Schlegel. I can't possibly come for twenty minutes unless it's life or death. Who's with her?"

"The—the policeman!"

Helen felt the world rolling round her, and crashing, and growing very cold.

Suddenly light came to her.

"Is Francesca dead?" she said.

Mrs. Schlegel shrieked again, and gasped out, "Yes—dead, an' I never heard her cry out!" Then she ran off up the street again, as if afraid for her own little one.

Helen looked after her for an instant; from the interior of the room came the voice of her patient.

Half an hour later the agitated young husband, who had forgotten all about the doctor, was making sacramental tea for his wife, and she was lying, white and peaceful, wanting to go to sleep, while the smell of warm flannel was wafted across the room from the fire where the baby's things were warming.

"I'll go now," said Helen, in a low voice to the nurse, "there's some trouble at home. Try to get an hour's sleep, nurse, before you start tidying up. Good-night."

"I hope I didn't give you too much trouble," came the patient's voice, weak and soft.

"Not a bit of it. You were a very good girl indeed! I wish every patient was as good," said Helen, mechanically. And then she was going very slowly along the grey street, listening to the pumping in the pit, meeting the colliers off the night shift, who smiled, showing white teeth in black faces,

and touched their caps to her, wondering why she looked so grey, so stern.

In the consulting-room the policeman sat, drinking tea. Upstairs Mrs. Schlegel was crying monotonously. The policeman put the cup guiltily aside as she came in. Beside him, standing up, fastened to him by the arm with something that glittered brightly, stood Amy, smiling stupidly. Helen mutely signalled to the man to drink his tea, and looked at Amy.

"You've killed *my* child, too?" she said.

Amy cowered behind the policeman, dragging his arm behind.

"You needn't be afraid of me, Amy. I shan't beat you," she said, shaking her head at the futility of fear; then, her eye wandering over the room, she saw that the lock of the dispensary door had been wrenched off—it was only a very flimsy thing. In the sink were two bottles; she took them up, one labelled "Tinct. Opii," the other the harmless "Mist. Acidi Co." that she had prepared that morning. On the desk were three more corrugated Poison bottles: "Ac. Hydrocyan.," "Tinct. Acon." and "Atrop. Sulphas." On the floor was a large bottle. She read the label mechanically as she put the bottle on the table. "Mist. Alb." she said, dully. "But that's not poison."

"What did you do with these?" she said, so quietly that Amy thought she did not care, and felt reassured; she had seen no danger from the law yet; the policeman Mrs. Schlegel's shrieks had brought running to the house seemed to her a friend and a protection from Helen's terrible, grey, un-angry face.

"I mixed them up," she said sullenly.

"Why did you do it?" asked Helen inexorably.

Amy suddenly thought that Helen, perhaps, like herself had wanted to get rid of the child—she could not otherwise translate her calm, her quiet questionings; she had argued that Helen would fly at her throat—hence her cowering behind the policeman; but Helen did nothing of the kind. She even spoke gently. Amy became expansive.

"It sang out in the night, an' I went to give it its dummy."

On'y there wasn't one about. Then it skrieked out at me, an' I 'it it!"

Something raged inside Helen; it began at her bones, rushed through her flesh like a slogan of battle, and tingled out at the tips of her fingers. She took a step towards Amy, and something overtook her; the murder-beast felt the pull of the leash of civilization—her face went very white; the tingle changed to a dulness. Her voice was very thin.

"Yes?" she said, inquiringly.

"Then I come over to the bed, and see its nightgown, all dolled up wi' blue ribbons, an' its hiderdown—an' I stuffed a pillow atop of its 'ead an' come down 'ere an' mixed all them things up. I give 'em to the kid, but it coughed em all up again. So I got me 'ands round its neck because it was kickin' up bobsydine, an' I was afraid the other woman 'ud wake up. It didn't 'arf kick. Then it went quiet—jus' same as mine, on'y this wuz stronger."

Helen was breathing quick, shallow breaths: she heard and realized what Amy was saying in slow jerks, but it did not seem to matter to her since a moment ago, when that red flood of murder had frothed up and gone from her. She watched fascinatedly as the sediment sank in the "Mist. Alb." First of all it looked like milk—milk in the baby's glass when she came in from the park. Then a thickness came at the bottom and a clearness at the top. That was when Amy said, "I got me 'ands round its neck." Now there was an inch and a half of marble whiteness at the bottom of the bottle. All the rest was translucent. She felt, somehow, that it would be impossible for her ever to prescribe "Mist. Alb." again.

The policeman's voice brought her to consciousness with a jerk.

"She says you know she murdered her child."

"Yes, poor girl. She told me to-night."

The policeman wrote in his book then, and stood up.

"I can't tell you what I feel, doctor," he said gruffly, "an' after what you done for poor Harris."

"What are yo' goin' to do wi' me?" shrieked Amy, feeling the pull on her arm as the policeman moved, and suddenly

realizing that he was no longer a friend against Helen, but an enemy leagued with her.

"You'll see quick enough, you nowt!" he said, grimly, and Amy turned on him, her eyes blazing, her face crimson.

"Lockin' me up, are you? Lockin' me up because I've choked her kid for her! Why the 'ell should 'er kid—blasted bastard—'ave ribbons and a hiderdown over it, when I 'ad for choke mine? Why shud people look up ter 'er, and scuff me underfoot? Arena we both——"

"'Ere, none o' that talk," cried the policeman, dragging her along and feeling for his whistle. "I'll have to get help with this lady, doctor. Now don't you go noticing what the foul-mouthed madam says."

Helen shook her head.

"She thinks it," she said, quietly, and again the un-anger of her face hit the girl and hurt her.

"Oh; Christ!" she cried, and, sobbing, turned without another word, hurrying so that the policeman had hard work to keep up with her.

And then Helen went upstairs, very slowly; she did not want to go and see what was in her room. She had seen too much of death and horror; she dared not look at it belonging to herself. Mrs. Schlegel, her face thickened with crying, came out of her room where she had been standing trembling, waiting to know what to do next. Charlie lay asleep, uncovered; the draughts from the window and door were blowing in upon him; she remembered how, only a few hours ago, she had thought he was not nearly so nice as Francesca. Mechanically she pointed to him, and his mother tucked the blankets round him.

What a long while it was since she had tucked Francesca into bed! One life had begun, another ended since then.

"Oh, God!" moaned Mrs. Schlegel, "whatever am I to say to you, m'm?"

Helen nerved herself abruptly, and turned into her room, closing the door and locking it after her. Mrs. Schlegel stayed on the landing half on tiptoe, her heart scarcely beating as she listened. But there was nothing to hear; *she* had done all the

screaming there would be. Helen was standing by the bed, in the cheerless light cast by the growing dawn into a room filled with gaslight. She looked first at the medicine glass tossed on to the white coverlet of her bed, with an ugly brown stain creeping up to its mouth. Then she saw Francesca's little fat foot peeping from beneath her nightgown. She remembered that she had been intending for weeks to get her some pyjamas, in case she got uncovered in the night when she was away from her; but these pretty nightgowns Miss Wembley had made, of fine flannel, scalloped and eyeleted and threaded with blue ribbon—it seemed a pity to put them away, even though they were rather small for such a big baby.

Next she saw the front of the nightgown, all stained and drenched where the child had fought desperately not to swallow the poison.

She shook her head and stood trembling there, her eyes unable to tear away from the stain.

"I can't——" she whispered, and even as she spoke she forced herself to look at Francesca's face. The cheerful sun tan was there; the pink roses were gone; the face was a purple bruise; round the white neck the marks of fingers were red and thick. Her mouth was open, showing the eight little teeth which, last week, she had learnt to click together with shrieks of delight at a new trick. Her eyes were open and dull—one of them suffused with blood where a small vessel had burst.

Helen stood for a long time looking at her, and she knew that whatever life brought to her now could not hurt her. She seemed to be standing there, flayed alive, with her bones turned to water—ever since that rush of murder towards Amy had gone. Soon she would be covered with scar tissue—stuff without nerves, stuff that could not feel. Soon her bones would not be water any more but stone.

She took Francesca in her arms then, and went downstairs. Mrs. Schlegel, seeing her dull face, shrank back into the shadows of the landing until she had passed.

Down in the consulting-room, amidst all her work, she sat with the baby on her knee, the golden head against her

shoulder, the fluffed curls tickling her neck. Mrs. Schlegel tapped at the door and came in, unable to leave her alone. But a glance at Helen's face sent her away again, along to the public-house where she could telephone to the hospital and get someone to share the misery. Then she went back into the kitchen to make tea mechanically, and leave it on the table forgotten. In the scullery she noticed the plate and glass, knife and fork Amy had used for her supper. She took them up gingerly with a piece of newspaper, and smashed them into the dustbin. After that she felt better.

And Helen sat there, very quietly, while thoughts played about her, ran through her, swept over her until Louis came and took Francesca from her and laid her on the couch. And presently, telling him all about it, she saw the pity of it as well as the horror, and began to cry.

CHAPTER XXVI

ALL through the inquest, and Amy's appearance in court on the charge of Wilful Murder, Helen gave no sign of feeling whatever. That had passed—only Louis had seen it. At the inquest she gave her evidence in a low, passionless voice. She told, first, how Amy had come to her that night, saying she had been turned out of home.

"You knew this girl before?" asked the coroner.

Helen's eyes strayed across the room to where Miss Wembley sat crying quietly; beside her was Parmoor, mopping his face and looking as though very little was needed to make him rise from his place and lynch Amy, who sat cowering and frowning, peering from between her wisps of untidy hair like a furtive animal.

"Yes."

"When did you first know her?"

"In April, two years ago. I attended her for puerperal fever."

"That was the time when she now confesses she killed her child?"

"Yes."

"On the night she was turned out of home what did she tell you?"

"She said that she was in trouble again. I offered to see her mother, and try to get the boy in question to marry her."

"Did you say anything to offend her, or incur her anger?"

"She did not seem to be angry. I gave her some more or less medical advice; I certainly advised her to take more care about her appearance. Then she had a bath and went to bed."

"Did you go to bed?"

"No, I went out at midnight to a confinement in Martin's

Street. It was just as I was going out that Amy told me about killing her baby. I had no time then to discuss it, but said I would do so next day."

"What time did you leave Martin's Street?"

"About four o'clock."

"When did you first know your child was dead?"

"About half-past three"; and she described how she had sent the patient's husband on a wild-goose chase because his anxiety was getting on her nerves, and how Mrs. Schlegel had come crying to her with the news.

"But why did you not go home at once when you knew the child was dead?" asked the coroner with a frown.

"I really don't see what that has to do with the case," said Helen, quietly. "I didn't go because my patient's child was born only a few minutes before I got the news; and it is unpermissible for a doctor to leave a patient for half an hour after that. Look up Clause E22 of the Midwifery Laws."

He asked a few more questions, reiterating things he already knew, until she was impatient. Then, fixing her with his glasses he said:

"Did Amy Willis give you her motive for this crime?"

Suddenly Louis darted from where he was sitting, a few yards from Helen.

"I must protest against this," he said, rapidly. "The girl has confessed, and Dr. Clevion has already had enough agony of mind."

"I am very sorry to give Dr. Clevion pain; my sympathy, and I am sure everyone's sympathy, is with her, but the question of motive is of primary importance in determining our verdict."

"Yes," said Helen, nodding her head to Louis, who sat twisting on his chair. "Amy was jealous of my baby, and of me. She hated to see her loved so much when her own baby was murdered; as—as—both our children were—were illegitimate she felt that mine ought not to have—preferential treatment."

Louis, watching Helen, saw the ominous whiteness of her lips as she sat in the witness's chair, immovable, while the

reporters' pencils raced over the paper. The coroner looked at her, and she looked at him, and from him to Amy. Then she spoke in a low voice:

"As Amy's medical attendant—and to help you in determining the motive—there is something I should like to add," she said.

The coroner nodded.

"I firmly believe the girl is a pervert, and quite unfit to be held responsible for her actions. She has been savagely treated from birth, from what she has told me at different times; when I first attended her, two days after the birth of a child, she was covered with bruises; all her life has been a steady brutalizing. I have watched her carefully, because she interested me as a case. This continued beating she had to undergo as a child—this lack of control which will make her the mother of two children before she is eighteen are all signposts to a psychologist. It is not a thing known to the lay public, but any psychologist will bear me out in saying that her mode of life has so far perverted this girl that to her a beating was an exciting and pleasurable experience rather than the reverse. And I firmly believe that she killed her child and mine in exactly that condition of nervous excitement aroused by her mother's cruelty that made her the sexual victim of any unscrupulous boy. I most strongly urge that she be placed under observation as to her mental condition—and I will prepare a report of my observations to give to the medical officer."

Amy, with her mouth loosely open, her face set in a sullen scowl, was listening uninterestedly. She was called after the coroner had thanked Helen for her evidence and told, exactly as Helen had done, all that had happened. She answered all the questions without a trace of horror at what she had done. When she described how the baby had struggled with her, she said, peering upwards, with her chin thrust out towards the coroner:

"It's not 'ard for kill anyone when yo've onct brought yourself to it! You know as it'll be over in a minute if you only stick it out an' don't get frightened. An' it makes yo' feel 'ot all ower, an' as if your bones is all meltin'. When I laid on

my kid I wuz two 'ours persuadin' mesel' for turn ower on it—but onct I felt it struggle nothin' would 'a' fatched me off it."

There was a shudder of horror and Amy was told to stand down. Once again she looked across at Helen, who seemed so cold and dead, and once again the police seemed a protection against that terrible impassivity.

The verdict was, of course, Wilful Murder, and at the court next day she was committed for trial at the Assizes.

Once more Helen stood in the clayey cemetery, not bleak and damp now—except in the graves, where the water always rose—but cracked and baked in the summer heat. Louis stood beside her, and so did several of the nurses. Parmoor looked apoplectic; Miss Wembley cried uncontrollably as the evangelical young curate, who—making up his mind to forget that Francesca was not baptized and Helen not married, had been very gentle—said the words that seemed such bitter mockery to her. As she and Louis and Miss Wembley drove from the house in Sharlock Street, with the tiny coffin covered in flowers bought with difficult pennies, they stopped a minute to pick up Father Joseph, who was trying to get there as quickly as they. And they saw then that every blind was drawn. But she could not realize that they were drawn in sympathy with her grief: she could not understand that one other bond had slipped from her, one last beauty in her life been turned to ashes.

For a month she went on as usual, no more and no less ready to help those who came to her with tales of cruelty and disease and sorrow, and give them the benefit of a kindly doubt. She never went near the cemetery, but often, passing that way, met Miss Wembley, and guessed where she had been. One day they stopped to speak. Miss Wembley tried to persuade her to go away for a change, or even come to stay with her for a while and get away from the associations of the house in Sharlock Street. But she shook her head.

"I'm not really unhappy, you know," she said. "The feeling side of me is all smashed up—and the work's an anæsthetic. If I didn't work hard I'd be dead."

"I believe I make more fuss about our baby than you do,"

said Miss Wembley, her lips quivering. "I wish I could be as brave as you."

"That's just where you're wrong. I'm not a bit brave. There's no bravery in not yelling out when you're under an anæsthetic. I just can't feel yet."

That evening she went to dinner with Louis, and walked for half an hour with Francis under the pines, treading on the crackling needles. He said that his message was reaching its end; he would give it to her next time she came up—she had always been very kind to him, and would she see that it was given to the world? She promised him. He was walking laggingly, jerkily, and presently, without realizing what he was doing, he leaned heavily on her arm. The pigeons that lived in a dovecote in the middle of the lawn were wheeling round before going to roost, and from the roof several crooned sleepily. He held out his right hand to them, smiling; thinking that he had food for them, they came fluttering down to him. His left arm hung dead and heavy in Helen's.

"My little sisters, the birds," he whispered, and gathered his voice to speak more loudly. "You are much beholden to God your Creator, and you ought at all times to praise Him——"

The pigeons flew away again; two of them wheeled towards the cote, with slow, heavy flight; from the laboratory roof-tree three called mournfully. Inside the cote one was cooing drowsily. He smiled again, looking into Helen's face.

"They that do the will of My Father—these are my sisters,"—he frowned, as though something were wrong, and shook his head; then he smiled again,—“my mother and my brethren.”

He pressed more heavily, then, against her, and before she understood it, his strength had crumbled and she was holding him from falling only by a supreme effort. Louis, who had been watching them through the window, and two of the male nurses who came at his whistle, ran up and lifted him.

"The Wound——" he whispered, and tried to touch his left side with his paralyzed arm,—“a great weakness—a heaviness—the shedding of blood—two thousand years——”

Before she went home Louis told her—what she already knew—that he would not leave his bed again. He looked very

happy there, with a shaded lamp beside him, and the deep pile of octavo paper written over with scrawling hieroglyphics that showed how all his finer muscular adjustments were failing, how the things acquired by humanity were slipping from him. The pages were there, and a pencil beside them; he could not rest otherwise, for at any moment more of the tremendous message might come through, and then the wavering hand must strengthen, the slackening muscles tighten, the tremulous memory go groping back—before they, too, were dulled and heavy.

Going home she reflected on a bit of gossip that had reached her that day—that Dr. Clevion didn't care much about her baby, after all—even going so far as to try to get the murderer let off! It seemed incomprehensible to her, just as incomprehensible as that flood of hatred for Amy that had swamped her for a moment.

At home a letter was waiting for her, with the London postmark. It had come by the last post. Seeing the embossed crest on the envelope she opened it with a little quickening of interest. It was from the General Medical Council. It said:

“You, Helen Clevion, M.B., F.R.C.S., visiting surgeon at the Cranmare Neurological Hospital, carrying on practice at Number 1, Sharlock Street, Lower Shellpit, are called upon to answer the following charge—that you have been guilty of infamous conduct in a professional sense by giving birth to an illegitimate child, the father being one Francis Reay, at the time a patient of yours, who was deprived of Holy Orders by an Ecclesiastical Court last year. Your case, having been widely reported in the Press owing to the peculiar circumstances surrounding the death of your child, has aroused wide interest and brought considerable disrepute upon your profession. The Council will meet on July 30th——” Then followed the names of those comprising the council, whom she was allowed to challenge if she wished.

For a long while she sat and stared at the letter. Charlie, who had a heat rash, was crying, a whining, irritating cry. Mrs. Schlegel was singing to him, and in a house a few doors away a terrific row was going on. Helen thought wearily that

they would be wanting her to stitch them up before long. Then she heard the pigeons crooning as they went to roost in the dying sunlight, and Francis—calling them his sisters—calling her his sister—if she did the will of His Father in heaven——

“I wonder if a man feels as I do when he’s seduced a girl?” she thought, and taking her fountain pen, wrote at the bottom of the accusation:

“This is quite true. I don’t think there is any defence that I could bring forward now. Please try to settle it so that my work will not suffer.

“HELEN CLEVION, M.B., F.R.C.S.”

This letter she herself posted at once. She said nothing about it to Louis; when the case was all dragged into the papers again by Amy’s appearance at the Assizes she still said nothing. Amy, on Helen’s evidence, and on the evidence of the prison surgeon who had kept her under observation, was sent to a lunatic asylum. She came into the dock yelling, “I finished your bastard off for yo’, didn’ I?” and thereby helped her own case considerably, by proving her insanity.

Later, into her dream came the decision from the Council. Her name was struck off the register without comment—a piece of kindness that hurt her more than harshness could have done. Two days later the report was in the *Lancet*. Louis rang her up before she was awake.

“Helen, what does this mean—in the *Lancet*?” he said.

“Oh, it’s in, is it? I didn’t tell you before.”

“But it says the case was undefended. You must have been mad.”

“What defence was there? You can’t make black white. ‘Infamous professional conduct’ is an elastic term.”

“But apart from anything else, your work is your defence.”

“I don’t care now, anyway.”

“But what are you going to do?”

“I don’t know, and I don’t care. Take in washing, if I can do it well enough.”

"Look here, Helen—I'm coming down to see you. Ah, Lord, no! I can't possibly to-day. Come up here to me."

"I can't. I don't want to see you. I don't want to see anyone, except Francesca. I'd like to go and live in the Outer Hebrides."

"Come up here and let's see what's to be done."

"No. This is the sort of thing one's got to manage alone. I can see that I've been carrying my troubles to you far too much. I've been making a bally Good Shepherd of you. Good-bye—I'll let you know when I've got through."

He went to his day's work very troubled about her.

That afternoon she sent for a carpenter to remove her brass plate. She took it up and put it on her bedroom mantelpiece, beside the crucifix.

"Relics!" she said, savagely, and went across the room to get the full effect of it. "Relics! Fetishes! Symbols! Like putting 'Lord' and 'Saint' in front of your names!" and she looked from the print of Lister to that of St. Francis. "If they'd struck you off the register, whatever would it matter? They can't kill what you've done."

She went out to the day's work, and told every patient that she was no longer a doctor, but they simply refused to believe her; in the evening the waiting-room was full, and outside was the usual gang of children waiting with medicine bottles to be refilled. She had a letter printed, explaining the facts of the case: a few of them understood, and came to see her, saying that if she would take the risk of treating them outside the law, they were not afraid. She went to see Father Joseph, to ask what he advised her to do, and could not take his advice when it was given, for he said simply:

"My child, put yourself into the hands of Almighty God and follow the leading of His Spirit."

"Can't do that," she said, and went away, frowning at the ground, while Father Joseph smiled gently, wondering how such clear eyes could be so blind.

That was the day she sold her car—money was getting scarce, and it was no more use now that she could go to the hospital no longer. She felt the loss of Louis's comradeship

very keenly, but knew that, until she had won out on her own hand, she must not see him, upon whom she tended to lean.

On the next Sunday night the weather was very hot, hotter than usual for August, and Bank Holiday was in the air. The drunks were already about the street; the children looked wilted with the heat as they played amongst cabbage-stalks, pea-shells, tea-leaves and greasy papers in the dust of the streets. The earnest young curate, with a band of enthusiasts, wished to bring good tidings of great joy into the gutter. Pushing a small harmonium and dragging with them two boys who boasted a cornet and a piccolo, they went down to Ruthers' Row singing "Down in the Valley with My Saviour I will go," as they slid down the steep hill. Some people laughed at them; a few threw surreptitious stones; one or two, in the maudlin state of drunkenness, joined in tearfully, and one or two were solemn. Then they came along Sharlock Street, and outside the church and the surgery they halted. Their following joined the queue outside Helen's door.

"—so I thought, if I come along an' got a bottle of that there stuff, doctor, it'd put a bit o' go into me. It's same as if the 'eat's took me off me legs," an old man was saying.

"It will do you good, I'm sure. And get into the Park as much as possible."

"Long way for my old legs, doctor. I never go out except for my pension from th' Post Office."

"I know it's a long way; but wouldn't it be a good idea to go in the early morning, and take some bread and cheese with you, and get a cup of tea at the Pavilion? In that part called the Lovers' Nook it's beautiful and cool—the trees are so shady. My baby used to go there to sleep every day."

She went into the dispensary to mix his medicine; she never passed the door without a shudder as she thought of Amy's fingers gripping the bottles. Out in the street the young curate was reflecting: he had seen one of Helen's circular letters to her patients—and loving his work, he guessed that she loved hers. He was not a very clever young man; he had been terribly shocked about her; but he understood pain when he saw it in a white human face. So he tried his clumsy best

to help her. The harmonium struck up a tune: the cornet and piccolo joined wildly in. Then his uplifted hand stopped them.

"If you could get those instruments all to start on the same note, boys!" he suggested mildly and the uplifted hand started them again. "Now then, all together!" He looked towards the surgery, hoping that she was listening: he had chosen the only hymn he could think of that dealt with the work of a doctor—"At even ere the sun was set." The rabble outside began to sing it, many of them searching back to childhood for a few disjointed phrases.

"Thank you, doctor," came the old man's voice.

"You mustn't call me doctor any more. I'm Miss Clevion now," she told him, with a rather unreal smile.

"Oh, don't tell me, now!" he said, reprovingly. "I'm too old a bird to be caught with chaff."

"It's quite true, Mr. Keys."

"I don't believe in any of them new-fangled notions—takin' folks's trades out o' their mouths! Them that doctors *is* doctors!" he said, chuckling as he went out, gripping his bottle of medicine like a lifebuoy.

The next patient came in. Helen listened dreamily—out in the street the voices were clear, the piccolo piercing—

"Thy touch has still its ancient power . . ."

The voice of the young man sitting in the chair opposite her broke into the dream:

"So I thought, doctor, the only straight thing was to get married at once——"

*"Hear in this solemn evening hour,
And in Thy mercy heal us all,"*

came the voices in the street; the young curate looked again towards the house; the curtain in Helen's bedroom was moving faintly. Had she, he wondered, been there listening? Had he spoken that word in season which his priestly endowment of counsel and ghostly strength had put into his mouth?

The patient came out. Helen was ringing Louis up.

"Hello, Louis."

"I say, it's good to hear you, old girl. Got it over?"

"Yes. Has it ever occurred to you how very little Christ ever talked about what He did?"

"Can't say that it has."

"Well, He didn't. You must bow to my superior Bible knowledge. And yet He was a first-rate doctor, wasn't He?"

"I suppose so. But what's the point?"

"Oh—only that He didn't talk about it. He just did it! Louis, I've got over it! And all through that straw-coloured young curate—the one with large Christian eyes and double-convex glasses! He's got a crowd out here singing hymns, and I was just trying to persuade a patient that I wasn't a doctor any more, when they sang 'Thy touch has still its ancient power.' I daresay the young curate would think me blasphemous—but I suddenly saw that nothing on earth can stop one's work—any more than dying stopped what Christ was doing. Recognition—success—pride—don't matter a damn, really. Do they?"

"Course they don't—though we all like to be in at the prize-giving, as you once said."

"Well, it's been hell, Louis. But I've just got to this at last—if you're building a new earth—even if you're only grinding up the stuff they make the mortar with—nothing can stop you, because you're being swept on by evolution."

"But I don't quite see——"

"No, you're getting dense since you haven't had me to ginger you up! Can I see you to-morrow?"

"Rather—all day!"

"No—look here, I'll come early in the afternoon. It's Bank Holiday, as you may not know in your cloister! There'll be black eyes and burns and drunks—and the hospital five miles away! You know the usual Bank Holiday Front Surgery crew! I'll come about two."

"Right! You'll never know how I've missed you!"

"Oh, I can guess—knowing how I've missed you."

The next patient came in, and, from the murmur of voices

outside, she guessed that the young curate was persuading the people to say the Lord's Prayer.

Something, she never quite knew what, made her go to the door and see her patient out, just as the crowd was straggling into the Mission. The curate stood by the door, shepherding them in, his large eyes preternaturally large and solemn as he looked towards the surgery and saw her standing there. She smiled at him almost gaily, waved her hand to him and went back to the consulting-room.

After the last patient had gone she took down her diplomas from the walls: they were framed and glazed; she took them out and carried the frames into the kitchen.

"Have you any photos or anything you could put in these?" she asked Mrs. Schlegel.

"Oh, please, if you don't want them."

She took out of the drawer in her desk all her old hospital papers; schedules, courses of lectures signed up, clinical appointments. She glanced at them all, and let herself dream about them. Then she dropped them into the grate and lighted them. With a cigarette between her lips she watched them burn.

"Fetishes—symbols," she said, and her voice cracked a little. Presently she took Francesca's birth certificate from where it lay in her note case. For a moment it hovered over the fire: then she put it back.

"No use. I can't do that. She's the only thing I've ever been sentimental about in my life. And I'll have to go on with it."

She looked at the charred papers in the grate and shook her head again.

"No use! If you're out to make a new earth you've to be logical, and you've to be ruthless with yourself! No time for self-gratification. You can't have the weakening, happy things—you can't have love. Oh, no——"

She sat down and stared into the black mass, and, as she saw what was to come to her, waters of desolation went over her.

Francis gone, Francesca gone, and with them the thing shin-

ing and beautiful she had so glibly told Miss Wembley to do without, before she had realized how strong, how instinctive is the desire for it. Nothing *intimate* left; no one she possessed, no one to whom she was all-important; no credit for her work—no standing among workers—in all the darkness nothing but the hand of a friend, and that a hand she must not clasp too often, for fear that, growing to need it, she should lose her own strength.

The noisy street grew quiet at last, and she sat very still, except that she shook her head several times, as she went torturingly over the dream she had dreamed, and the more cruel, unbearable, lacerating fulfilment of it—Francesca, who had been so much more soul-satisfying than the will-o'-the-wisp of passion she had tried to grasp and to hold.

"No use!" she said again, and this time she set fire to the birth certificate and held it in her fingers till it was burnt. "If you're trying to build a new earth you've to be whole-hearted; mustn't skulk in graves. There's a loneliness—an utter loneliness—the loneliness of one's own strength. It's a sort of sublimation, I suppose."

The last spark charred itself out and she stared at it.

Mrs. Schlegel came to say that supper was ready, but she told her to have her own meal and go to bed, and still she sat on.

"I suppose, after all, that's all life is—just sublimation," she said, after a long time. "Evolution—transmutation—lot of 'tions! They all come to one thing—finding one's own strength!"

When the house was quite quiet she took a thick new pen-nib and a sheet of cartridge paper. On it she printed, in her neat script, very bold and black,

"HELEN CLEVION,
CERTIFICATED MIDWIFE."

She put it up in front of her and laughed at it; it looked so ridiculous. But after a while she found that it was losing the shock of newness, and, boring two holes in the top, she threaded

a piece of string in them and, going into the waiting-room, hung it in the window.

"A morbid sort of person would creep out and look at it, but I'm not going to," she told the empty chairs in the dark room. Then she went to bed and, hugging the pillow very tight in her arms, tried to persuade herself, by scarcely breathing, that she was not crying.

CHAPTER XXVII

HELEN was walking up to the hospital. As she came through the outskirting streets and squares of New Shellpit, she met Parmoor. He was very sentimental for a while, and seemed concerned at her white face. But she manœuvred him from personalities, and he became enthusiastic.

"I say, we've been and gone and doon it this time, doctor! Remember I told you one day as I'd bought all that there Weaver's Hollow estate?"

She nodded.

"Well—I've give it! Free, gratis, for nothing! What price that, eh? There's John Parmoor for yo'! And five thousand pound for start a new General Hospital. New Shellpit's eight mile from th' Distric' Hospital, so we'll 'ave one of our own!"

"That's great! But will you get enough money?"

"Enough money! I shud just think so! Owd Ruthers, out i' South Africa, has sent another five thousand. And we're going to build a Children's Hostel where the bloomin' kids can go when their mothers is laid by. Yo' know how th' poor little devils gets neglected them times. In fac', it was a remark of yourn that put it into me 'ead!"

His small eyes were very bright, guilelessly seeking praise, his pink face was very earnest.

"It was such a jolly good head to put the idea into, wasn't it?" she said.

He flushed with pleasure. She was treating him like a child.

"Somehow it's got 'old of me! This job, I mean—this New Shellpit! Just same as getting the biggest butchering business i' Shellpit got 'old of me when I was a young man! It's same as if it won't let me rest now," he said.

She nodded her head and said, with an air of confidence:

"It never will let you rest any more, Mr. Parmoor—it's got me just the same!"

He came up to the gates of the hospital with her, panting a little to keep up with her quick steps, mopping his neck with his silk handkerchief.

"I wisht we wuz doin' it together," he said, looking at her sentimentally.

She laughed.

"You're a nice old man," she said, "but a terrible sentimentalist, aren't you?"

He watched her up the drive, shaking his head, mopping his face.

The Rector was on the verandah with Louis, just coming out, when she reached it. They looked at each other in paralyzed silence for a moment. Helen did not know whether to risk hurting him by speaking to him, or to turn away tactfully. He solved the problem. Putting up his umbrella to keep off the sun, he advanced towards her, holding out his hand.

"Why, Dr. Clevion! It must be ages since we met!" he said.

Helen giggled helplessly.

"I—er—or—ah—was discussing you with my wife last night, doctor, and I—we—I—was going to call on you if I may."

"Well, why not?" she said.

"You see—Muriel has—er—become imbued with a—sort of passion for a medical career. And we wondered if it would be possible for you to—er—advise us——"

"I'd love to," she said. "If you ring me up first, so that I am sure to be in."

The Rector went off thoughtful. In the study Helen, without preliminaries, announced that she was now a certificated midwife. When she said it her mouth twisted a little, and, so that she need not cry about it, she added:

"My career seems to suffer as many changes as young Andrew's. He was an engine-driver last time, wasn't he?"

"But, my dear girl, you've always so loathed midwifery."

"Silly pride, that! A hatred of the obvious! Everyone said

women doctors ought to stick to gynæcology, so I tried to steer clear of it. Anyway, it's all that's left to me, unless I become someone's dispenser—which isn't likely, with my character! They'd be afraid that I'd seduce my employer! Besides, you know, midwifery is frightfully important. Moreover, I've got to live. I've still loads of patients who won't realize that I'm not a doctor any more. As an old dear last night said, 'Them that doctors is doctors,' which is unanswerable, the Medical Council notwithstanding. But I can't charge 'em—except for the drugs."

He knew that argument was useless. She had stayed away from him till the time for argument was passed, and once again he got that sense of helplessness that Helen gave him, together with the certainty that she was, at last, safe.

"Oh, it's good to sit down in this dear old chair! Hand over those cigarettes, Louis! Spinets? Glory! I've been subsisting on Navy Cut and occasional packets called 'Sweet as a Rose'—horrors!"

She sat back and smoked the cigarette through in silence. Then she laughed, as she tossed the end into the fireplace.

"Isn't it nice to sit and smoke with someone you don't need to talk to? Carlyle—wasn't it? Oh, Louis, it has been awful!" she said, as she turned to him.

"I've felt so inadequate——" he began.

"You were! So was anyone. But now—I've found that if you can cut the personal element out of it, nothing can stop your work, or hurt you. Even if you do things that get your work discredited, once you can stop grizzling because you were such a muddler, the work goes on. And it's swallowed me up—this idea of making a new earth."

He stared at her, wondering if she were deceiving herself, or him, or neither of them.

"You see——" she went on. "Throw over another Spinet, Louis!" She lighted it, gave two appreciative draws at it, and said: "You see—you lose everything and you think you can't live. But you do, and you find after a time that the pain has had a tonic effect on you. You cry out, and writhe—— Oh yes! Then by degrees you realize that there's a sort of

arctic loneliness predestined for those who want the wide view of life; they've certainly no brethren, as Christ said. They've to lose the whole world to find their own souls! And after a time they accept that as part of the quest. Look at you and me, Louis, forty-two and thirty-two, and a whole lifetime of love and ambition behind us already! You have your boy left to you, miles away. I haven't even that. And before us—just a long vista of work—always for other people, always in complete stiff-backed loneliness. There, that's all! No more talking for me, Louis. Can I see Francis?"

He came across the room to open the door as she went out.

"Do you know, I do wish we'd got married," he said, suddenly.

She shook her head.

"I don't. I'd never have got to this if we had. All this misery has brought me. I'd have leaned, and leaned on you. Men are awfully bad for women!"

Francis was sitting propped up in bed. He smiled, a twisted smile. His eyes seemed too tired to open, but very bright beneath heavy lids.

"Mary," he said.

She came over and took his hand in hers.

He looked towards the fascicles on the table. He seemed calm, collected; he said quietly:

"My message——"

"May I read it?"

"I want you to. I want you to give it to the world for me. I want you to be first in the kingdom."

"Yes, I will read it," she said, and took the papers in her hand.

He looked at them as if he could not bear to part with them. Then he smiled.

"It's unfortunate that I am ill just now—with all the work finished. But the doctor says this dulness in the side—where the Spear went through—is very natural. I suppose it is!"

"Probably—if you rest——" she began. "Anyway, I'll see that the message is delivered."

"I must leave it—that's all."

She stooped and kissed him, and went away, taking the papers with her.

She looked at the top page, a straggle of indistinguishable marks. Her eyes grew cloudy.

"I may keep them, Louis?" she whispered.

"Of course. They're yours."

"I must go now. Such a long walk!"

"No. I'll send Lloyd with you," he said, quickly, and they had half an hour longer together, talking of the Children's Hostel, and Louis kept regretting that he had not been clever enough to think of it before.

"One of the things that prevents people from getting well—worrying about their kiddies while they're in hospital? And they have them in Australia—I ought to have remembered!"

He looked thoughtful, absorbed.

"I wonder where I can get the money?" he said, frowning.

She swallowed back a sigh as she ran out to the car.

The waiting-room was, as she had expected, filled—children scalded while parents drank and squabbled; children cut, finding bread-and-butter for themselves while their mothers made holiday in the public-houses; a child with diphtheria to be got away instantly to the fever hospital; men and women bruised and beaten because the Bank Holiday rest had loosed devils that the Bank Holiday drink and contiguity had fed. At last they were all gone, and she was using her Sanitas spray because the place was so stuffy. Then came Mrs. Schlegel, awkward, embarrassed.

"I've been wondering for days what was the matter," said Helen, gently. "I seem to have been so full of my own worries lately."

Mrs. Schlegel hedged for a long time. At last she blurted out:

"It's no use, doctor. I've fought and fought against it because I was so fond of you. But I can't go on with it."

"What do you want to do then? There, don't cry about it! Tell me."

"I can't live like this," she said, miserably, "just work, and

go to the Park or the Pictures. I seem as if I must have someone to make a fuss of me."

"There's Charlie," ventured Helen, thinking of Francesca.

"Yes, but it isn't the same. I feel as if I'm getting older and older—thirty-two now—and I never have a bit of fun. Well, it isn't really as if I want fun so much—somehow I can't live if I never have a man about me. You can't help your nature, can you?"

"That's a question! I think you can alter yourself pretty considerably if you think it's worth while to try."

"I've tried, like anything. That night you found me at the Bath-house. It was just like cutting my head off, but I did it. I never saw that fellow again. Then when you was in Scotland, there was a fellow—I got nearly sick fightin' him off. It's same as if it burns me up for a bit, and then it dies down. And now there's a fellow I've been keeping company with nearly a year."

"But—your divorce?"

"This young fellow went to a lawyer, and he says Charlie stands in the way of that. But—he's straightforward enough, is Walter. He says he'll take to Charlie if the Society of Friends will keep Herman's child, and they've agreed. He thinks if we was to go out and settle with his brother in Australia no one need know we're not married."

"You're quite sure he's the sort to stick to you?"

"Yes, quite—he's a sober old stick, but very fond of me. Only I can't bear the thought of leaving you, after all you've been through, and all you've done for me."

"Oh, don't you trouble about that! I'll miss you very much—and Charlie. But I shall find someone——"

They discussed details, and at last Mrs. Schlegel got up to go to bed.

"I feel I ought not to go—you look so white, and you're so lonely——"

"Don't be silly! I'm always trying to stop people from being sentimental! You've your own life to live," she said quickly, and to herself she added: "Your *own* life! Yes! You're not making a new earth!"

"It's wonderful how well you understand people," said Mrs. Schlegel with a sniff.

"I shouldn't be much use as a doctor if I didn't! Now run away to bed, and just don't worry any more," she said, and nodded with a smile to Mrs. Schlegel, who was standing tearfully at the door.

When she went up to bed she took Francis's message with her, to lock it away in a box with all the little garments Miss Wembley had made for Francesca. But when she got into bed, she took the top fascicle and turned it over, tracing out here and there a word that was decipherable. Then, in the midst of all the scrawls and straggles she saw signs that stood out clear and black on the third page. She frowned at them for a while, until it came to her that they were the Greek characters Alpha and Omega, very imperfectly made. She sat up in bed, interested to see the weak formation of the letters strengthening as he wrote them again and again. Came a sentence in English:

"I saw a new heaven and a new earth——"

"I wish I could!" she muttered. "I suppose it's only mad people who can——"

Followed some Greek words she could not decipher, and then, again, in English, very clear and black:

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."

Frowning a little at the echo-like familiarity of the words, she turned over three more pages of weak, reduplicated scratches. At the bottom of the fourth was:

"Blessed are the single-hearted, for they shall see God."

She stared at the words, and then away from them, letting them take hold of her. Her eyes caught the queerly juxtaposed pictures over the mantelpiece and narrowed.

Single-hearted! Lister, the man of science? Francis, the little poor man of God? Did it cost everything one had to become single-hearted? And having paid, did they see God? And what was it to see God, anyway?

The next page was pitiful. It was written as an adventurous-spirited little child, bored with copying in horizontal, left-to-

right lines, would have written—a vertical line of printed letters, all the “a’s” and “e’s” in Greek character.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the Sons of God.”

“Why, this is the Sermon on the Mount!” she said, and decided to go up and find the Bible Miss Wembley had shyly given her for Francesca, so that she could make sure. Instead, she went on following the weak pencil lines, and read:

“Blessed are ye when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely——”

“That’s all very well!” she said, sitting up straight, “but if it isn’t falsely at all? If you make awful blunders and get talked about? Not much blessing in that!”

The next page answered her.

“Rejoice, and be exceeding glad—for if ye resent not evil, then is the evil overcome with good——”

For days after that, judging by the indescribable scratchings, he seemed to have written nothing definite until, clear and black, came:

“Love your enemies. Bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you. Think well of them that unkindly and ungratefully use you, for you are the children of your Father in heaven.”

After that came “your Father in heaven” written five times, but each time “in heaven” was crossed out and “hidden” substituted. At the bottom of that page he had written, *“Be ye therefore perfect as your hidden life also is perfect.”*

As she turned over the leaves again, her heart almost stood still, for he had written the words he had said the day she asked him to name Francesca.

“Do ye renounce—the pomps and glory of the world—and covetous desires—for the children of God have not where to lay their heads.”

She dropped the papers on to the sheet, and lay back, staring out into the blackness of the sky; and she shook her head several times hopelessly.

“It’s no use, Francis—it’s a counsel of perfection, perhaps. But it’s too hard for ordinary people like me.”

Then the words beat themselves back into her brain, insisting on personal application, and once again her eyes narrowed, and for nearly an hour she lay back, very restfully, thinking. When she took up the pages again they were more unreadable; sometimes they were very faint; sometimes thick lines showed a sporadic spurt of dying strength. At last something glowed strong and compulsive.

"The spirit of God within you—so that ye love one another. . . . As Children of one Father——"

There were three blank pages after that, and then the date of yesterday written in small, neat writing which she guessed to be Nurse Walters'. She looked at it with an aching pain in her throat as she sensed him gathering and amassing the unwilling power to write:

"I saw—a new earth—the city of God—I saw no temple therein—and the light of God did shine in it. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.—The gates of it shall not be shut—for the nations shall bring their glory and honour into it—and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither—any more pain. For the old things are passed away—make all things new."

And that was all. She turned back and read his message again. The gas went out. She got out of bed to put a penny in the meter, but paused and went to the window, and stood looking out into a world of black velvet.

For a long time she thought of the new earth.

Down there, over Napoli, the undying fires of the forge flared to the sky, like the flush on a suddenly shamed face; the Nasmyth hammer thudded, and stopped, and went on again like the heart of a man with syncope. Across the street, through a broken window, came heavy snores of a man sleeping off the Bank Holiday drink; she had stitched his wife's chin up during the evening. Sometimes he grunted in his sleep, and muttered.

To the right was Martin's Street, with a charred heap of debris among which nettles had sprung. Further to the right was the clayey cemetery—where she never went.

"Love your enemies? Do good to them that hate you?"

She shook her head.

"Well, I suppose a saint like Francis could. But ordinary people can't."

Again flooding memories of good she had done to those who despitefully used her, came in upon her, insisting on personal application, and she added, with a puzzled frown, "Anyway, not consciously."

She shook her head again, listening to the snoring man.

"Probably having a religion does help you if you're trying to make a new earth. But I couldn't. Fetishes!—Symbols!—No use to me——"

She went quietly into the little room where Amy had slept that night. From its window, over a thousand roofs, she could see the distant line of the moor. There was the hospital.

"There shall be no more pain, neither sorrow nor crying—no more death——"

She thought about that, deliberately, slowly. How pain and death were being conquered, and tears wiped away from sad eyes! How Science, flaming-eyed like an archangel, Science in sackcloth and ashes like poor Lazarus, was coming into her kingdom! And there, next to the hospital, was New Shellpit. Former things *had* passed away, up there. And she had builded, and failed. Old Parmoor had builded, and builded well, and the work had taken him out of himself, caught hold of him, would not let him go. And Ruthers had given to it money that was not quite clean; yet the little, hopefully new earth was rising there! It came to her again, with more force than ever, that the new earth would go on, in spite of the muddles of its builders. The Nasmyth hammer would go on, and men and women would work and quarrel and suffer, but as they either consciously did the will of a secret God, working out a hidden life within them, or unconsciously followed their predestined path from the beast, they would quarrel and suffer less.

And she would go on here, and Louis would go on, up on his hillside; and sometimes Louis would grind his face down in the pillow in a passion of inadequacy and regret. But next day they would come to him for healing, and he would forget

the storm of the night, and the work would go on. And sometimes she would feel floods of futility and famine-times of loneliness press upon her; and sometimes she would feel that she was a fantastic being in a sane world; and sometimes she would get impatient that the people didn't bring back their medicine bottles, and wouldn't open their windows, and wash themselves. But somehow the work would go on. And while the earnest young curate quarrelled about vestments and the Eucharistic sacrifice, and preferred his dim religious light to the clear noonday of the City of God, he would yet gropingly be teaching a few people to say "Our Father."

"I believe we build better than we know," she said, suddenly. "We do these things unconsciously, just out of our ordinary humanity. Then people like Christ and Buddha and St. Francis come along and put them into words for us—crystallize things. Yet we've been doing them all along, without knowing it."

She went back to her room; the night was past; the greyness of dawn was just flushing with sunrise.

"Good old Father Joseph! When he told me to put myself under the will of Almighty God and follow where His spirit led—I wondered why he smiled when I said I couldn't. Lord! I didn't realize what an *Almighty* God he meant!"

She locked the message away; what need to publish it when people were following it already, not only with their lips but in their lives?

"I've been rather like a man standing with the sunlight beating all round him, yet refusing to believe in heat because he'd an uneasy feeling that some people died of sunstroke, and some people got burnt."

She leaned through the window again, watching the growing light.

A man came down the street, hurriedly dressed in shirt and trousers, his hair ruffled, his eyes sleepy.

He looked up and saw her.

"Mornin', doctor. I were just comin' for fatch yo'. My missus 'as bin bad all night. Her thinks it isna far off."

"Right, I'll come. Ten, Ruthers' Row, isn't it?"

"Yes, doctor."

The man stumped away, and the knocker-up went along the street banging at windows with his long pole. Chimneys began to smoke, doors to open.

Helen dressed quickly and went out into the dawn.

18 Jan 1924

THE END

9-14

